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Four historical studies, carried out under the direction of Professor Raven I. McDavid and reported in this monograph, trace the various attitudes toward language study expressed in the journals (1911-63) of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). For the years between 1911 and 1929, Betty Gawthrop reports a cautious questioning of the usefulness of "textbook rules" and of British Received Standard pronunciation before the introduction and tentative acceptance of linguistics. C. Michael Lightner points out that the NCTE was hospitable to research and change, defended a descriptive approach to the study of grammar, and was responsible for the publication of four major investigations of grammar between 1930 and 1945. Doris C. Meyers indicates that from 1945 to 1954 contributors to NCTE publications deplored the disparity between advanced grammatical theory and actual language instruction, resisted pressures to de-emphasize English in the curriculum, debated language permissiveness, and urged language research. In the final study, Geraldine Russell reports that from 1955 to 1963 the importance of levels of usage was generally recognized and a de-emphasis of grammar gave way to a new interest in linguistics, in reformed traditional grammar, and in generative grammar. (JS)

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* no. 4 in a series of research reports sponsored by the NCTE Committee on Research

# An Examination * of the Attitudes * of the NCTE Toward Language

*RAVEN I. McDAVID, JR., Editor*

TE 000 959

National Council of Teachers of English 508 South Sixth Street, Champaign, Illinois 61820

## The Structure of This Study

. . . this research project analyzes attitudes toward language study which have been significant in journals published by NCTE since 1912. The emphasis is on articles from the *English Journal*.

. . . the objective is to clarify the issues in evaluating new developments in the study of language as to their relevance to the language arts classroom. Only materials relevant to language and the teaching of language are included in the study.

. . . each writer deals with a chronological period. Each period witnessed development in ideas on language and the teaching of language. As a unit, the book gives us a comprehensive picture of this development to the present.

National Council of Teachers of English

Research Report No. 4

# An Examination of the Attitudes of the NCTE toward Language

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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# AN EXAMINATION OF THE ATTITUDES OF THE NCTE TOWARD LANGUAGE

An analysis of the development of ideas on language study as reported in journal articles published by NCTE

by

RAVEN I. McDAVID, Jr., Editor
BETTY GAWTHROP
C. MICHAEL LIGHTNER
DORIS C. MEYERS
GERALDINE RUSSELL

**NCTE Research Report No. 4**

**NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH**
**508 South Sixth St., Champaign, Ill. 61820**

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is another in the series designed to bring significant studies to the attention of the profession. The special contribution of this monograph is the perspective it brings to a problem truly vexing to hosts of teachers of English. Progress in the study and teaching of language has been rapid, and many busy teachers have been left behind. Professor McDavid notes in his introduction, "Within my lifetime I have seen as great changes in our knowledge of language as in our knowledge of the ultimate constituents of matter—and changes with as great and terrible potentialities for the human race." This monograph is a documentation of that statement.

This group of historical studies, carried out by graduate students of Professor McDavid at the University of Chicago, is a departure from the kinds of research reported in the preceding three monographs, two of which reported analytical studies, the other a combination of case study and analytical research. In education, historical research has not enjoyed recently the prestige of analytical and experimental research. Yet the kind of collection and interpretation of data illustrated in these studies is at the heart of research. There is an important fringe benefit in publication of this monograph: scholars who direct graduate students may give renewed thought to groups of related studies such as this in which the total scope is too great for one thesis or dissertation.

It is important to note that the authors studied *attitudes* rather than *the attitude* of the NCTE toward language. In such a huge organization *an* attitude is impossible. The researchers found, as I knew they would since I edited an NCTE journal for nine years, a diversity of attitudes toward language and the teaching of language. And yet they did not find chaos. Directions of progress are clearly evident.

No matter to what extent the future may bring a further explosion of knowledge in the study and teaching of language, perspective on the present situation is valuable. "A momentary stay against confusion" was vital to Robert Frost and may be to most of the rest of us.

DWIGHT L. BURTON
*Chairman, Committee on Research*
NCTE

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# Introduction

Raven I. McDavid, Jr.

Early in 1959, while editing the abridgment of Mencken's *The American Language*, I noticed a sharp discrepancy between some of the attitudes toward language attributed to the NCTE in the past and those manifested in the activities and publications of the NCTE as I knew it. Consequently when Mr. Lightner, then a graduate student at the University of Chicago, wished to do a Master's essay on American English, I suggested that he trace the evolution of the attitude of the Council as expressed in its publications, notably the *English Journal*. When he discovered, inevitably, that he could deal with only a part of the evidence before the quarter ended, he decided to treat the decade and a half preceding World War II. Although this division was more or less arbitrary, it was justified by the fact that 1940 saw the appearance, under NCTE sponsorship, of Fries' *American English Grammar*. This work, which deserves serious rereading every few years by every conscientious teacher, has for rational observers effectively settled the basic problem of how to arrive at usage judgments, though disagreements continue about the status of certain items.

Nearly five years passed before Mrs. Gawthrop undertook to survey the early history of Council attitudes; the following quarter Mrs. Meyers and Miss Russell brought the history down to 1963. By that time, it was obvious that others—scholars, teachers, and laymen alike—might profit as I had done from the historical perspective these papers provide. They appear essentially as composed, with such obvious editorial modifications as the removal of duplications and the addition of a few explanatory footnotes. Any lapses in this part of the task may be laid at my door; any merits in the presentation belong to the authors.

## II

For many laymen—and even for some professional educators—the intense reexamination of the nature and aims and achievements of American education began in October 1957, with the successful launching of Sputnik I. The shock of realizing that Russian technology

was as sophisticated as ours not only made legislative bodies (especially the federal government) more generous to education but made the public more receptive to reappraisals of the American educational system, notably the various Conant reports. But, concerned primarily with science and technology and with the replenishment of our intellectual elite, this Sputnik-shock had little direct impact on the problems of the English teacher. These problems, however, were soon dramatized by the difficulties in overcoming the effects of segregation and discrimination, South and North, especially by the difficulties in providing the Negroes of the urban slums with an education that would fit them for employment in something better than their traditional but outmoded role of unskilled labor. Since a command of some variety of Standard English is necessary to clerical, sales, and managerial work, it was soon apparent that genuine integration could not be achieved until better programs, beginning in kindergarten or earlier, were devised for teaching English to those whose social dialects were sharply divergent from the standard. And at the same time the entire English program in the schools came under severe if generally sympathetic scrutiny.

In this period of reexamination there have been widely divergent attitudes toward the descriptive study of current English. Some literary scholars still see no place for this study in the program of either undergraduate or graduate majors in college, let alone in the schools; some innovators would make it the keystone of the school program and of freshman English—and point to impressive success; some frightened souls see in the descriptive (or "structural") linguists a subversive force that would overthrow all standards. This last group has been particularly vocal since the publication of *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* in 1961—itself a shock of discovery for adherents to the genteel tradition of belles lettres. Under the best of circumstances one could have anticipated some repercussions from the attempt to make the largest American dictionary reflect changes in the language, especially in the standard language, and in the society in which that language is used. A series of minor tactical errors on the part of the Merriam Company—ranging from the omission of conventional capitalization and the lack of typographical variety in complicated entries to promotional releases that exaggerated the unconventionality of citations—combined with acknowledgment of the influence of modern linguistics, gave plenty of ammunition to those who had never understood linguistics, to those who had seen their control of

traditional foreign language departments threatened by the new methods associated with linguistics, and to those who had been cavalierly brushed aside by linguists displaying the bumptiousness that often goes with new and unaccustomed power. A good deal of the adverse criticism of the *Third* is devoted to the thesis that "structural linguists" are responsible for all the deficiencies in the speech and writing of the younger generation. That this thesis is absurd, that the small group of structural linguists has never been in a position to exercise so much influence, that the Merriam dictionary on balance has had a favorable reception, that linguistics—the serious and systematic study of language—is flourishing, will not bring this criticism to a halt. And of course the disagreements among linguists are often discouraging to the layman or teacher who would prefer simple rules that can be applied mechanically.

Here the history of the Council—spanning only a small part of the time in which Western education has been committed to teaching effective use of the vernacular languages—shows us that our contemporary problems are old and familiar. New discoveries and inventions, a growing complexity of technology, and a rising standard of living have repeatedly created a demand for new kinds of scientists and engineers and technicians, and pressures to incorporate their training into the educational system. The demand for unskilled labor has steadily declined; that for skilled specialists has increased. As simple work has become more complicated, the need for greater literacy and for better written communication has burgeoned. As the school population and the number of years in attendance have grown, ever larger proportions of those in the classroom have come from homes where the traditional values of humanistic education are of little importance, where even the stan lard language is a foreign idiom. To cope with the new situation created by the new clientele, especially in high school and college, new theories of language analysis have been introduced; old theories of grammar and usage—not to mention methods of applying those theories—have been continually reexamined in the light of new evidence and of insights provided by other disciplines. And each such reexamination has been greeted with charges that the innovators were in favor of abandoning all standards and letting anything go. It is amusing to note that this last counsel has never been seriously offered by any linguist—as effective as it might be if it stood a serious chance of acceptance. As observers of their culture and participants in it, linguists are aware that the ability to use the stand-

ard language is a prerequisite for many kinds of educational, economic, and social opportunities. No one has ever insisted on the need for standards more vigorously than has C. C. Fries, to choose an obvious example.

## III

Here, it seems, is a good place to lay the ghost of the old controversy over "prescriptive" and "descriptive" grammar. The dichotomy is false. To paraphrase Milton, all education is prescriptive by definition. But, taking an analogy from medicine, the person giving a prescription should be aware of what he is prescribing and why he is prescribing it. A more accurate description of the language—its structure, permutations, and variations—will ultimately be reflected in more effective prescriptive work in the classroom. But it is one thing to describe a language, another to translate that description into a pedagogically viable framework, a third to apply it effectively to the everyday assignments in composition and literature. Not everyone can play all three roles; and of those who can, not everyone knows how to keep the roles distinct. Improvement in teaching the use of the English language, and the understanding of how the great writers have used it, will demand close and prolonged cooperation among all sorts and conditions of people—theoretical linguists, scholars in all aspects of English linguistics, textbook writers, publishers' editors, methods teachers, and particularly the English teachers in the elementary classrooms.

## IV

Two final deductions may be made from the historical evidence provided in these essays.

First, throughout the history of the Council the most serious and distinguished students of the English language have been well represented in the *English Journal*, *College English*, *Elementary English*, and most recently *College Composition and Communication*. If individual editors have varied in their attitudes toward particular kinds of articles, in the long run all schools of linguistics have been represented.

Second, if the study of language is a science, it will not be the same tomorrow as it was yesterday. Within my lifetime I have seen as great changes in our knowledge of language as in our knowledge

of the ultimate constituents of matter—and changes with as great and terrible potentialities for the human race. To the destructive potentialities of the latter knowledge, the former opposes its creative ones. Doubtless each competing school of linguists will yield a little in the future dialogue, to build a new syncretism from which other theoretical advances and practical applications may arise. The history of the Council shows that as scholars learn more about the English language, the classroom teachers will be ready to put that knowledge to use.

# 1911-1929

Betty Gawthrop

In 1910 a study conference was convoked by the National Education Association to try to find some solutions to the problems caused by the then newly instituted Uniform Entrance Requirements in English for colleges. When, in the course of their study, this group discovered that except for some local organizations and an occasional temporary committee or conference with nationwide participation, the teachers of English in this country were not organized in any way that would be of specific value and interest to them in their profession, the study conference set about to bring such an organization into being. Thus it was that in December 1911 the first meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English was held, and the organization expressed as its purpose the "increased effectiveness of school and college work in English." The *English Journal* was to serve as a "clearing house of experience and opinion for teachers" and as a means of reporting to members on the regular meetings of the NCTE.

Although the most immediate concern of the new NCTE was with the problems of preparing students to meet the new Uniform Entrance Requirements, the teaching of English in its various aspects —literature, drama, oral and written composition, journalism, grammar and punctuation, along with professional concern for teaching conditions, standards of measurement, professional training, and social applications of language and literature, indeed all matters related to the teaching of English—came under the early scrutiny and study of the NCTE at meetings and in the *English Journal.*

In the beginning the attitude of the members of the NCTE toward language appears to have been one of surprising unanimity. Both in what was to be taught (the rules of the textbooks were unchallenged) and in the method of teaching (memorizing the rules and repetitious drill in using them, often referred to as "habit formation") there was such solid agreement that virtually no discussion of them was considered necessary. There were only two problems in teaching language that came under discussion in the early days of the NCTE. One of these was the disturbance caused by advocates of various simplified spelling systems, and the resultant confusion in the minds of teachers and pupils as to the proper spelling to use. Although this problem

was discussed at length in several early articles, and the NCTE appointed a committee to investigate the problem and make recommendations, the issue disappeared from discussion within a few years as English teachers resigned themselves to traditional spelling and focused their attention instead on the suddenly mushrooming problem of grammar.

The other problem in teaching language was that of the lack of a uniform grammatical nomenclature. This problem was itself caused by the existence of two somewhat incompatible bases for the concepts of grammatical structure. One was a wholesale application of Latin grammatical rules (even to teaching "case" of nouns) called "the old reliance upon form," and the second was a newer lexical concept of syntax, described as "strengthening the conception of English grammar as the science of thought-relationships."[1] It was felt that a uniform terminology would eliminate confusion and greatly facilitate the teaching of grammar. One of the first working committees formed by the NCTE was the Committee on Grammatical Terminology. This committee was instructed to draw up "a list of grammatical terms in accordance with the principles of necessity, scholarly accuracy and economy."[2] The general satisfaction with the textbook rules made it possible for the committee to draw up a list of uniform nomenclature describing English language and syntax. The list was submitted to the NCTE and accepted in 1913.

Practice in using correct grammar was secured through both written and oral composition. And oral composition introduced another problem which vexed many members of the NCTE—that of securing correct pronunciation, clear articulation, and "well-placed voice." British Received Pronunciation was considered the approved standard, and many pages of early issues of the *English Journal* were given over to discussion of means of achieving this ideal. It was considered to be the duty of English teachers to drill students in correct pronunciation as well as correct grammar, and dialectal pronunciations were condemned as "speech defects."[3]

During these early years, excepting those minor areas of uncertainty concerning grammatical terminology and spelling, the corpus

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[1]Cyrus Lauron Hooper, "Grammar for Teachers," *English Journal*, 1 (January 1912), 62.

[2]"Proceedings of the Second Annual Meeting," *EJ*, 2 (January 1913), 44.

[3]Claudia E. Crumpton, "Better Speech Week at Montevallo," *EJ*, 5 (January 1916), 569.

of knowledge about language appeared to the NCTE as certain, definite, fixed, precise, and eminently teachable by rules and thorough drill. An article in the *English Journal* in 1916 stated that "the rules of English composition are quite as logical and quite as easily explained, and consequently imitated, as are the rules of mathematics."[4]

However, this happy state of affairs was not to continue unchallenged. In 1917 an article appeared which commented on the presence of a number of dialects in England besides the Received Standard and on their historical antiquity. The author defended the use of both British and American dialectal pronunciations and asserted that American speech is not just a degraded or plebian form of British speech but a separate offshoot and quite as acceptable as British pronunciations.[5] This lone protest was apparently largely ignored, however, and a wave of enthusiasm for "Better Speech Week" swept the NCTE. This movement had originated in Montevallo, Alabama, the year before. It was patterned after "Better Babies Week," "Fashion Week," and similar festivities of the time. Its aim was to improve speech through such devices as posters, parades, newspaper articles, student elections of classmates who used the best speech, and short skits of the type in which "Mr. Dictionary" defeats the villain "ain't." Other regions of the country seized upon the idea, and Better Speech Week became something of a national phenomenon for the next ten or twelve years with the NCTE serving as a clearing house for information, suggestions, and materials for posters, skits, parades, and contests as methods of improving and correcting speech. Enthusiasm ran high at first, and, lacking objective measurements, there was a perhaps inflated evaluation of the results obtained. "With us, it seems now only a matter of time until Alabama does her part toward making American speech truly pure and beautiful."[6] Other organizations joined with the NCTE in this effort, and a National Speech League, among other efforts, devised the following pledge for children:

> I love the United States of America. I love my country's flag.
> I love my country's language. I promise:
>
> 1. That I will not dishonor my country's speech by leaving off the last syllable of words.

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[4]Paxton Simmons, "Coddling in English," *EJ*, 5 (December 1916), 664.

[5]Fred Newton Scott, "The Standard of American Speech," *EJ*, 6 (January 1917), 1-11.

[6]Claudia E. Crumpton, "Speech Betterment in Alabama," *EJ*, 6 (February 1917), 96-102.

2. That I will say a good American "yes" and "no" in place of an Indian grunt "um-hum" and "nup-um" or a foreign "ya" or "yeh" and "nope."
3. That I will do my best to improve American speech by avoiding loud rough tones, by enunciating distinctly, and by speaking pleasantly, clearly and sincerely.
4. That I will learn to articulate correctly as many words as possible during the year.[7]

The American Speech Committee suggested that teachers attach a list of 365 frequently mispronounced words to the pledge card. With time a more candid appraisal of results of Better Speech Week brought disenchantment, and finally in 1929 the NCTE announced in an editorial in the *English Journal* that since so many teachers felt the efforts disproportionate to any real accomplishment, the movement was being abandoned.

Meanwhile, subscribers to the *English Journal* began to see an occasional article suggesting approaches to language study other than the customary drill. An article in 1917 by a doctor suggested that kinaesthesia might be useful in helping children learn how to articulate the various sounds of the language.[8]

In 1918 an article by George Philip Krapp noted that some of the textbook rules appeared to be at wide variance with language both in speech and writing and went on to suggest that research in phonetics and facts about American speech might be more productive than dogmatic concentration on textbook "ideals or aspirations for speech."[9]

This article was followed by another that same year by S. A. Leonard stating that too much time was spent in teaching "insignificant conventions of wording and idiom" when many of the expressions condemned as incorrect were in fact listed as colloquially accepted in Murray's *New English Dictionary*. Leonard felt that teachers' time could be better spent with pupils in concentrating on more important matters like organization of ideas and "coherent, solid constructions in both sentences and themes."[10] He, like Krapp in the earlier article,

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[7]Katharine Knowles Robbins, "The Chicago Speech Survey," *EJ*, 7 (March 1918), 175.

[8]James Sonnett Greene, "Kinaesthesia, a New Aid to the Teaching of Speech," *EJ*, 6 (April 1917), 248-253.

[9]George Philip Krapp, "The Improvement of American Speech," *EJ*, 7 (February 1918), 87-97.

[10]Sterling Andrus Leonard, "Old Purist Junk," *EJ*, 7 (May 1918), 295-302.

suggested that research in actual usage might reveal important differences between textbooks and speech and that the speech usage might be considered respectable instead of being condemned out of hand as incorrect.

Then in 1919 the *English Journal* published an article which discussed linguistics and advantages which could be gained by teaching linguistics—particularly history, structure, and usage—in high schools and colleges. The idea was so new that the author of the article felt it necessary to define the term *linguistics* in some detail and to suggest a list of books which teachers could read to learn more about this new science.[11] The beginnings of a change in methodology were apparent about this time too. With cracks appearing in the edifice of traditional grammar, which had previously been regarded as unassailable, its twin structure, the system of drill and habit formation, came under attack too as writers began to advocate language teaching not as "a mental discipline" with strictly inflexible rules for grammar and pronunciation, but language regarded as a means of effective expression suitable to the occasion. A concern for teaching language as used in social situations was voiced, and experimental student-participation exercises for teaching language usage in various social settings were described in the *English Journal.*

In November 1919 an article stated that the work of the NCTE Committee on Grammatical Terminology was obsolete already because its list of terms had been based on the old "formal" rules derived from Latin, Greek, and German, and they did not fit modern English language needs.[12] But acceptance of the principle of usage was still a long way off. In 1920 thousands of schools and communities across the nation celebrated Better Speech Week with slogans, pledges, and parades, and an article in the *English Journal* summarizing the results ends with the puristic statement: "The path of linguistic righteousness is as steep and difficult as such straight and narrow paths are wont to be."[13]

In October of 1920 W. P. Reeves[14] wrote an article in which he explained that study of historical linguistics revealed complete justi-

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[11]Ella Heaton Pope, "Linguistics as a Required Subject in College and in High School," *EJ*, 8 (January 1919), 28-34.

[12]C. H. Ward, "The Next CGT Report," *EJ*, 8 (November 1919), 519-526.

[13]H. G. Paul, "A Report on Better Speech Week," *EJ*, 9 (April 1920), 194-200.

[14]W. P. Reeves, "Our Pragmatic Language," *EJ*, 9 (October 1920), 431-439.

fication for American English dialects and idioms, and went on to state that these dialectal forms and usages were natural, vigorous expressions of modern American life. The traditionalist viewpoint was easily the dominant one, however, and the Report of the Proceedings of the NCTE in the *English Journal* for 1920 shows this in an NCTE committee report listing five basic areas to be covered in English courses. Among the five was "a thorough understanding of the grammar necessary to the mastery of the sentence and for the correction of certain errors in accepted grammatical usage." But the battle lines were drawn. A spate of articles decrying "middle class vulgarization of English," and expressing fears that "standard American English in American democracy means a lowering of standards of speech," as well as articles recommending ever more rigorous training in pronunciation in schools and earlier stress on grammar in the lower grades, reveals that the linguistic theories of usage in dialect and in grammatical structure were making impressions (albeit sometimes painful) on English teaching. More articles appeared pressing for effective present-day use of English rather than strict standards. The ratio of articles favoring traditional textbook grammar to those favoring linguistic principles was about 4 to 1 between 1920 and 1923. In November 1923 Kenneth D. Wright wrote that teaching syntax by intent (lexical meaning) was a more rational method than by verbal cues.[15] But in 1924 Otto Jespersen countered with an impressive article on teaching concrete phonetics and grammar as they are used.[16]

Linguistic scientific methods were indeed penetrating the traditionalists' camp, and in that same year, 1924, the *English Journal* published an article based upon a scientifically methodical study entitled "A Statistical Study of Current Usage in Punctuation,"[17] but the study was aimed at determining which "errors" occurred most often so that teachers could concentrate on correcting them. Another statistical study was published later that year concerning children's errors in usage and capitalization. But on the other hand, an article printed that same year pointed out the value of newspapers and magazines for teaching English grammar, which was a long step toward the recogni-

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[15]Kenneth D. Wright, "The Rational Teaching of Syntax," *EJ*, 12 (December 1923), 689-692.

[16]Otto Jespersen, "The Teaching of Grammar," *EJ*, 13 (March 1924), 161-176.

[17]Helen Ruhlen and S. A. Pressley, "A Statistical Study of Current Usage in Punctuation," *EJ*, 13 (May 1924), 325-331.

tion of modern usage from the 1912 article which had deplored the effect of newspapers on students' English.

Statistical and objective studies of language increasingly received attention in the *English Journal.* In the 1925 volume "A Statistical Study of Children's Errors in Sentence Structure" was followed shortly by a study of "The Relation of Intelligence to Vocabulary and Language Training." In November of 1925, C. C. Fries challenged the entire system of textbook grammatical rules with an article entitled "What Is Good Grammar?"[18] in which he firmly stated that usage is the real basis of correctness. Immediately following the Fries article was one extolling original and expressive slang.[19]

In a 1926 article, W. A. Craigie[20] described the proposed *Dictionary of American English* on historical principles and concentrating on American usage. Telling of the vast amount of research that would be necessary, he urged scholars, students, and teachers to aid in collecting examples of American English usage. The NCTE noted this concern of its members with language usage by appointing a committee to investigate the situation. It was instructed to investigate "what are the demands actually made upon the adult American today with respect to his use of language and what are the difficulties which he experiences." Statistics were gathered throughout the nation by means of questionnaires, and a report[21] was submitted complete with charts and analyses which concluded by recommending that more teaching time should be devoted to effective use of language in activities of daily life such as conversations, interviews, and public speaking, with graphic representation of language taking a subordinate role.

In 1927 S. A. Leonard and H. Y. Moffett published in the *English Journal* the results of an extensive survey they had made about current English usage.[22] For this study, they had asked a large number of well-educated, cultivated persons to rate the usage or nonusage of a num-

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[18]C. C. Fries, "What Is Good Grammar?" *EJ,* 14 (November 1925), 685-697.

[19]R. W. Cowden, "Slanging English Words," *EJ,* 14 (November 1925), 697-706.

[20]W. A. Craigie, "The Historical Dictionary of American English," *EJ,* 15 (January 1926), 12-23.

[21]NCTE, "The Report of the Committee on Place and Function of English in American Life," *EJ,* 15 (February 1926), 110-134.

[22]S. A. Leonard and H. Y. Moffett, "Current Definitions of Levels in English Usage," *EJ,* 16 (May 1927), 345.

ber of words and expressions dealt with in current grammar textbooks. The charts published revealed that many expressions regarded by textbooks as correct were avoided by cultivated speakers as pedantic, and other expressions described in texts as incorrect were widely used by these same persons. English teachers were urged to examine their textbooks in the light of these findings about current accepted usage and not to waste time trying to "correct errors" which by and large only textbooks and purists considered "bad grammar."

Following this report, a number of articles appeared in subsequent issues of the *English Journal* urging textbook revision, a liberal approach to grammar, and usage as a criterion of acceptability. By 1929 the new linguistic approach to language seemed fairly on the way to winning acceptance with members of the NCTE, for an article by C. C. Fries in the *English Journal* that year[23] devoted little space to urging teachers to consider using a linguistic approach to language but instead concentrated on more detailed suggestions as to what might actually be done. This article was followed by one by C. H. Matrauers entitled "A Corrective Language Program" which did not urge correction of speech to conform to any rules of grammar or artificial style of pronunciation but instead suggested means by which language might be taught for mastery of socially useful forms to meet language needs of real life.

But probably the most decisive indication that linguistics had been accepted in the NCTE was a report by an NCTE committee in 1929 which recommended that prospective English teachers should be trained in (1) elements of phonetics, (2) practice and use of phonetic notation, (3) elements of Old English and elements of Late Middle English, and (4) Modern English from a scientific linguistic point of view based upon living speech in vocabulary and dialects.[24] This report was an important stage in the growth of linguistic realism among the profession of English teachers.

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[23]C. C. Fries, "Educational Pressures and Our Problems," *EJ*, 18 (January 1929), 1-14.

[24]"Training in English Language for English Teachers: A First Report of the National Council's Committee on English Language Courses in Colleges and Universities," *EJ* (College Edition), 17 (December 1928), 825-835. The committee included Samuel Moore (chairman), Leo L. Rockwell, W. F. Bryan, C. C. Fries, J. S. Kenyon, T. A. Knott, R. L. Ramsay, and J. F. Royster. The significance of the report is found in Harold B. Allen, "Teacher Training in the English Language," *EJ* (College Edition), 27 (May 1938), 422-430.

From its inception, and throughout the entire period under discussion, the NCTE attitude toward language was one of an open-minded willingness to listen to all viewpoints, to undertake investigations when called for, and to make recommendations based upon their findings.

# 1930-1945

C. Michael Lightner

Late in 1929, the president of the National Council of Teachers of English, in an address before the Council's annual convention, remarked the diversity of opinion existent within the organization. "In grammar we still come to blows among ourselves over how much and how."[1] Although recognizing the differences of opinion, she was able to generalize about the group as a whole:

> Our English Council has of recent years given great consideration to linguistics. Debate has waxed warm and newspaper headlines have distorted intended meanings, but our stand as a group has been neither that of Swift nor the spelling reformers, but instead a wise recognition of conditions that exist, a study of the past as an aid to judgment on the present, and a wholesome readjustment to the shiftings which time inevitably brings.[2]

This generalization is no less true of the Council today than when Miss Inglis delivered it. In following the attitude of the NCTE toward language during the years 1930-1945 as it was expressed in the pages of the *English Journal* and through Council-sponsored publications, I found that organization not only hospitable to change but anxious to discover the truth about language.

In these years the pages of the *English Journal* were frequently given over to "enlightened" discussion of grammar, and more influential perhaps, the National Council was responsible for the publication of four major investigations of grammar. These fifteen years tend to fall into three stages in the development of a consistent attitude toward the study of grammar. The first stage is one of discovery, of growing awareness that the Standard English which was taught in the schools might not be consistent with that used by the "educated and intelligent" people of the country. S. A. Leonard's *Current English Usage* was published in 1932, and the study expresses the tenor of the first stage.[3] From 1935 to 1940, the Council sponsored two publica-

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[1]Rewey Belle Inglis, "Retrospect and Prospect," *English Journal*, 19 (January 1930), 15.

[2]*Ibid.*, p. 17.

[3]S. A. Leonard, *Current English Usage*, English Monograph No. 1 (Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1932).

tions. *An Experience Curriculum in English*[4] appeared in 1935, and *Facts about Current English Usage*[5]—an extension of the Leonard monograph—appeared in 1938. Expressing confidence in the liberal attitude toward language, these studies preceded and foreshadowed the publication of *American English Grammar* by C. C. Fries.[6] An examination of these major expressions of NCTE attitude supplemented by major articles appearing in the *English Journal* discloses the progressiveness of the Council.

The general attitude exemplified in the period from 1930 to 1935 is striking. Colloquialism is defended as ". . . vigorous, effective, worthy of respectful handling by wise teachers," and the "hidden bond which will preserve the tang and vitality of the language through centuries to come."[7] The split infinitive is justified on the grounds of meaning.[8] English teachers are advised against being extreme purists and against overemphasizing trivialities. Liberality is urged in teaching usage with the warning: "What we are saying is *wrong* may rapidly be becoming *right*."[9] S. A. Leonard's *The Doctrine of Correctness in English Usage 1700-1800* appeared in 1930 and was praised in a principal review in the *Journal* for exposing the "baseless superstitions which most of the taboos in diction are."[10] The work of Leonard tended to dominate the period from 1930 to 1935. Helen Rand, in an appeal for functional grammar, referred to his study in urging the abandonment of artificially imposed structures on the English language. In a paper read before the twentieth annual meeting of the NCTE, she spoke of the wastefulness of teaching transitive versus intransitive verbs and direct versus indirect objects. The study of grammar must be transferable to life situations, and "the parts of grammar which will not help in these

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[4]W. W. Hatfield, *An Experience Curriculum in English*, English Monograph No. 4 (Champaign, Ill.: NCTE, 1935).

[5]Albert H. Marckwardt and Fred Walcott, *Facts about Current English Usage*, English Monograph No. 7 (Champaign, Ill.: NCTE, 1938).

[6]C. C. Fries, *American English Grammar* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1940).

[7]J. W. Sewell, "Colloquialism at the Bar," *EJ*, 19 (March 1930), 196-200.

[8]Edgar Paul Hermann, "To Nicely Squelch a Proofreader," *EJ*, 19 (March 1930), 240-242.

[9]E. R. Barrett, "English Usage for Teachers," *EJ*, 19 (April 1930), 302-308.

[10]C. H. Ward, "The Dogma of 'Correctness' Exposed," *EJ*, 19 (March 1930), 244-245.

places had better crawl out of the textbooks and lessons and go back a century or two to the time when they died, and bury themselves."[11]

The first monograph published by the National Council was Leonard's *Current English Usage.* To the general public the study seemed extreme and in complete violation of the cherished stereotype of the English teacher. Members of the Council, however, had been adequately prepared for the study in view of the articles which had appeared in the *English Journal,* notably by the earlier study of Leonard and Moffett, "Current Definitions in English Usage."[12] *Current English Usage* was an extension of this earlier study, employing the same methods and having the same purpose in view.

A group of 229 judges, including linguistic specialists, editors, authors, businessmen, teachers of English and speech, were asked to rate a number of expressions and conventions of punctuation in light of their current use. The correlated results of the judges' replies were a revelation, and Leonard urged a new definition of grammar as "something not final and static but merely the organized description of the actual speech habits of educated men. If these habits change, grammar itself changes, and textbooks must follow suit."[13] The evidence was lucid and definite in favor of a general revision of the "laws" of grammar. From the body of the research Leonard was able to generalize that a number of usages entirely in accord with the textbook rules of formal grammars were avoided by careful speakers and writers because they were "pedantic or finical." Among these were: the use of the article *an* with certain words (such as *historical*) beginning with *h*; the "strained avoidance" of the split infinitive; and the insistence upon a formal sequence of *one's* in such phrases as "One is master of one's destiny." Certain expressions unequivocably condemned by most handbooks were found to be nonetheless in frequent use by educated speakers: *the reason why; none are; healthy* for *healthful; pretty good;* the use of *shall, will, should, would; try and; got to;* the split infinitive; *slow* and other adjective forms used as adverbs, etc. Finally, formal grammar was found to be at fault in

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[11]Helen Rand, "Grammar through the Traffic," *EJ,* 20 (October 1931), 552-562.

[12]S. A. Leonard and H. Y. Moffett, "Current Definitions of Levels in English Usage," *EJ,* 16 (May 1927), 345.

[13]S. A. Leonard, *Current English Usage,* English Monograph No. 1 (Champaign, Ill.: NCTE, 1932), p. 188.

setting up rigid rules for the case of personal pronouns after *to be* and of the interrogative pronoun *who.*

The publication of Leonard's study was to start a new wave of articles in the *English Journal* urging the teachers of English to abandon the traditional approach to grammar and to welcome the findings of Leonard into their classrooms. The English teacher was asked to be a "liberal, not a purist or a pedant." Utility was seen as the fundamental criterion in evaluating expressions. A word accepted by a large body of intelligent and educated people was useful. "In deciding whether to include a point in grammar or usage in his campaign for better speech and writing, a teacher should consider frequency of use and frequency, persistency, and social seriousness of errors."[14] Since the discrimination between *shall* and *will* is disregarded by many intelligent and educated people, the "misuse" of the words will not be socially serious. *Shall* and *will,* then, deserve an inconspicuous place in the English program. Students should be introduced to levels of usage, it was urged, in order to realize what may be right may also be wrong—right in ordinary conversation or an informal letter, but wrong in a formal essay.[15] In November of 1932 an editorial in the *Journal* encouraged the separation of colloquial terms from those considered dialectual, obsolete, or slang. *Current English Usage* was cited in support of the argument that a colloquialism is far from incorrect in many situations.[16]

The question of what to do with "the great usefulness of the truth that has been almost buried under pedantry, and that now is fully displayed" in the Leonard report[17] occupied contributors to the *English Journal* through 1935. Prior to the study it could be said that "curriculum makers are unanimous in their desire to teach those elements of grammar which function in speech and writing. They are, however, far from agreement concerning what those elements may be; the number of topics taught in courses of similar aims varies from 45 to 149."[18] With the results of *Current English Usage* in hand, the

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[14]J. C. Tressler, "What Conventions Shall We Teach?" *EJ,* 21 (March 1932), 200-204.

[15]*Ibid.,* p. 201.

[16]Editorial, *EJ,* 21 (November 1932), 765-766.

[17]C. H. Ward, "Current English Usage," *EJ,* 22 (January 1933), 79-82.

[18]Dora V. Smith, "Recent Trends in the Teaching of English," *EJ,* 21 (February 1932), 141-142.

curriculum maker was, for the first time, ready to deal with some degree of success with functional grammar.

R. C. Pooley found that the textbooks were "fearfully reactionary" in their attitude toward the language and its current use. He, in accord with Leonard's definition, considered grammar "the accumulation of facts about a language; it has no legislative or executive powers."[19] In a minute study of sixteen of the most widely used texts of the day, Pooley found that they failed to deal with four outstanding problems of usage. They (1) failed to recognize the "psychological factor" in number-agreement problems; (2) ignored the history of English ("The tolerance bred of historical perspective is strangely lacking."); (3) erected artificial distinctions between forms of equal acceptability; (4) failed to recognize certain current tendencies in speech change.[20]

Instruction in formal grammar was generally under attack. Authorities upheld the relatively minor function of grammar in solving problems of accepted usage, but "practice, as usual, lagged behind theory." One contributor[21] to the *Journal* suggested dividing grammar into five categories—functional grammar, doubtful functional, formal, useless, and pernicious. Her categories amply convey her attitude toward traditional language teaching.

In view of the disparity between theory and actual practice, many considered the advantages of the NCTE's becoming a type of legislative body after the example of the French Academy. In 1934 an article appeared in the *Journal* by J. C. Tressler, a frequent contributor. He raised the question "Should the National Council act as an American academy?" His answer seems worthy of consideration, since the question is inherent in the Leonard study. The recognition that "correct" usage is a factor in social station creates in those who have learned the language a reluctance to concede points of grammar to those who merely use it. "Some critics denounced *Current English* as a surrender to ignorant Americans who speak English without ever having studied it or speak it only as a foreign language."[22] Speaking for the Council, Tressler insisted that far from acting as a language academy in pub-

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[19]R. C. Pooley, "Grammar and Usage in Composition Textbooks," *EJ*, 22 (January 1933), 18.

[20]*Ibid.*, p. 19.

[21]Verna L. Newsome, "Making English Grammar Function," *EJ*, 23 (January 1934), 48-57.

[22]J. C. Tressler, "Should the National Council Act as an American Academy?" *EJ*, 23 (April 1934), 293.

lishing the Leonard report, the NCTE took no responsibility for the findings. The study just reported facts of current usage. The Council had no desires or pretenses about becoming an arbiter of the rightness or wrongness of usage. The experience of the French Academy illustrated the futility of resisting change, and

> Most linguistic experts believe that the language is safe on the tongues of men. . . . Although popular changes tend to break down nice distinctions, these changes keep the language simple, vigorous, vivid, alive.[23]

The plight of the English teacher in 1935 was a peculiar one. The National Council, having labored for several years in its meetings and in its publications "in the interest of linguistic liberalism,"[24] had provided its members with a handbook to current English usage. But how was this definition of usage to affect the teaching of English? Albert Marckwardt used the pages of the *English Journal* to deplore the situation and to suggest that in spite of the revelations embodied in *Current English Usage* and the general work of the NCTE, the attitude of the English teacher toward the problems of everyday English had been little affected. "We have," he said, "provided the teachers of English with a slogan, a war cry, but have neglected to supply the arms and ammunition."[25] The textbooks in use would continue to be reactionary until there was a change in the popular demand.

In the same year that Marckwardt defined the problem, the National Council attempted to answer it. The Curriculum Commission, under the chairmanship of W. W. Hatfield, issued a report as *An Experience Curriculum in English.*[26] The fourth *English Monograph* of the NCTE, it came in answer to numerous requests for curriculum patterns. Although the *Curriculum* incorporated all aspects of English teaching, the way in which grammar was considered was the most revolutionary and startling part of the book. Conservatives were shocked at the Commission's recommendation that all grammar separate from the manipulation of sentences be discontinued. The *English Journal,* in an editorial defending the study, recognized the *Curriculum*

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[23]*Ibid.*, p. 297.

[24]Albert H. Marckwardt, "The High-School Teacher and a Standard of Usage," *EJ*, 24 (April 1935), 283.

[25]*Ibid.*, p. 284.

[26]Hatfield, *op. cit.*

as a pioneer, although imperfect, attempt "to embody in a definite program a theory which has long been rendered lip service by most liberals."[27]

In explanation of its stand on grammar, the Commission advocated five criteria in the determination of correct usage. Correct usage must find its authority, not in the seventeenth or eighteenth century grammarians, but in the living language of the day. It must recognize the dialect and geographical variations in language; the insistence on the rightness or wrongness of a figure of speech is a convenient but inaccurate means of classification. It must judge the expression according to its appropriateness to the intended purpose. It must recognize social levels of speech, and finally, it must take into account the historical development of the language. With these criteria in mind, the Commission suggested the rule of thumb:

> Good English is that form of speech which is appropriate to the speaker, true to the language as it is, and comfortable to speaker and listener. It is the product of custom, neither cramped by rule nor freed from all restraint; it is never fixed, but changes with the organic life of the language.[28]

In accordance with this liberalism toward "correctness," the *Curriculum* avoided the teaching of grammar as a prominent or distinct feature of the course of study. In light of the failure of scientific investigations to show the effectiveness of grammar in eliminating usage errors, it was not organized in the suggested curriculum for that purpose. And, although a grammar outline was presented separately in the study, the reader was cautioned against the assumption that it was to be taught separately. "The outline might be omitted entirely without changing the curriculum in the least; it is here presented merely to demonstrate to the skeptical that the grammar is being taught—through use."[29]

The only real concession made to the traditionalists in *An Experience Curriculum* is a unit outline which was designed for the exceptional high school senior who might presumably enjoy and profit from the presentation of systematic and logical grammar. It is not "functional" or "practical" grammar as opposed to that which was to be taught obliquely but grammar as "a body of classified knowledge

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[27]Editorial, *EJ*, 25 (January 1936), 66.

[28]Hatfield, *op. cit.*, p. 242.

[29]*Ibid.*, p. 229.

about language."[30] With an examination of systematic and descriptive grammar, the suggested program embodied a historical survey of the development of the language.

From such a concrete presentation of the liberal attitude toward language teaching, there was to stem much controversy. It appears from an examination of the *English Journal* that as long as the liberal attitude was expressed without regard to curriculum the traditionalists were not often moved to protest. With the publication of the *Curriculum*, the opponents of "functional" grammar grew extremely verbal.[31] "The pendulum has swung too far, and now must swing back again," predicted one contributor to the *Journal.* "The opponents of grammar have been outspoken against it, frankly and without apology. Let its advocates be equally outspoken in its favor."[32] Another writer in the controversy said the value of functional grammar was not such to justify the adoption of the *Experience Curriculum.*[33] J. C. Tressler, in a statement typical of him in its sensibility, advocated the middle road. "Grammar is coming back with a bang. If she retains her interest in application and limits sharply her classifying, analyzing, and theorizing, she has, I predict, many happy years ahead."[34]

In support of the liberal attitude, Dora V. Smith writing as an experienced researcher on the question defied her opponents to furnish evidence on the positive side in their advocation of formal grammar. Miss Smith pointed out that the persistency of errors was evidence that the time being spent on the elimination of so-called errors was extravagant and futile.

> More time is being spent in high school English classes of America today upon grammar and usage than upon any other single phase of instruction. Daily checking of what was going on in classrooms from Seattle to Richmond, Virginia, and from Los Angeles to Cranston, Rhode Island, established that fact in 1932. It is further substantiated by similar data from daily visitation in fifty representative towns in New York State in 1936.[35]

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[30] *Ibid.*, p. 289.

[31] Editorial, *EJ*, 25 (January 1936), 66.

[32] Reed Smith, "The Swing of the Pendulum," *EJ*, 27 (October 1938), 637-643.

[33] Harry N. Rivlin, "The Present Status of Research in Functional Grammar," *EJ*, 27 (September 1938), 590-597. See also Harold B. Allen, "Teacher Training in the English Language," *EJ* (College Edition), 27 (May 1938), 422-430.

[34] J. C. Tressler, "Is Grammar Dead?" *EJ*, 27 (May 1938), 396-401.

[35] Dora V. Smith, "English Grammar Again!" *EJ*, 27 (October 1938), 643-648.

In this controversy the National Council can hardly be said to have been unbiased. Although both sides of the debate were aired in the *English Journal,* one suspects from the emphasis given the functional-grammar camp that a majority of Council leaders accepted the attitude expressed by Walter Barnes in a paper read before a general session of the NCTE in 1936, "We should . . . focus our teaching upon language as a social phenomenon, language as group conduct, language as a means to 'doing things,' as a running accompaniment to other activities, upon the psychological rather than the linguistic, the sociological rather than the logical aspects of language."[36]

Indeed in the midst of this controversy, the National Council sponsored the publication of *Facts about Current English Usage.* The authors—A. H. Marckwardt and F. G. Walcott—stated their purpose as an extension of the earlier Leonard monograph. As valuable as the earlier study had been, it had investigated only opinion about usage gleaned from observers of the language. It had not arrived at the facts of English usage, and half the expressions investigated by Leonard had been placed in a "disputable" category which gave no decisive answer to the status of the expression. In view of these shortcomings of *Current English Usage* and the appearance of the second edition of *Webster's New International Dictionary* and the *Supplement* to the *Oxford Dictionary,* a supplementary investigation appeared justifiable.

Contrary to Leonard's assumption that dictionaries were necessarily slow in recording current usage, Marckwardt and Walcott found that opinion on usage lagged behind actual usage as recorded in the *Oxford Dictionary.* Of the 121 items which were labeled "disputable" by Leonard's judges, 106 items were found in Standard English usage as well as those so designated. "We may conclude, then, that the teacher of English is not only safe in accepting the so called 'established' usages of the Leonard report, but there are seven chances out of eight that a 'disputable' item is wholly current in Standard English as well."[37] In regard to the "disputable" usages this study observed that the expressions about which the objections of the purists centered were, in most cases, not neologisms but old forms and usages of the language which were struggling to survive. Of the whole group of 121 disputable expressions, 27 arose in the nineteenth century, 2 in the

[36]Walter Barnes, "American Youth and Their Language," *EJ,* 26 (April 1937), 283-290.

[37]Marckwardt and Walcott, *op. cit.,* p. 50.

eighteenth, 20 in the seventeenth, 22 in the sixteenth, and 24 some time before 1500.[38]

The appearance of *American English Grammar* by C. C. Fries in 1940 marks the beginning of the final five-year period under discussion, the period from 1940 to 1945. Financed by the NCTE and supported by the Modern Language Association and the Linguistic Society of America, the *Grammar* undertook not "to teach people how they ought to speak, but on the contrary . . . it merely states how, as a matter of fact, certain people do speak at the time at which it was written."[39]

Files of informal correspondence in possession of the United States Government were made available to Fries. Over two thousand letters were classified in three categories according to the social status of the writer. The language of the letters was then studied as specimens of each class. Language at the upper end of the scale, or that of Group I, was considered socially acceptable, "standard" English. The language of Group III was called Vulgar English. Between these two extremes was Group II—the majority of people in American communities—the users of "common" English. In the investigation thus far, Fries merely approached the study of usage as had Leonard and Marckwardt before him. Although his method and materials were different, his study rendered similar conclusions.

> There are many details that are discussed in our handbooks of usage, which are not matters of distinction between the practices of Standard English and Vulgar English. Here it has been assumed that the obligation resting upon the schools is to teach the knowledge of and the ability to use the "standard" English of the United States. But for a workable program, the teaching must deal with real Standard English, that which is actually used in conducting the major affairs of our country, and not with grammatical usages that have no validity outside the English classroom.[40]

Fries insisted that if the schools were to deal effectively with the language of pupils, they must take for the foundation of their program certain points of agreement. These three points summarize the aim of the *Grammar,* and, indeed, the subsequent attitude adopted by those who think rationally about the language: (1) educators must agree

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[38]*Ibid.*

[39]H. C. Wyld, quoted in Fries, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

[40]Fries, *op. cit.*, p. 287.

upon what kind of English the schools are obligated to teach; (2) they must agree to base their teaching upon an accurate, realistic description of the actual practices of informal Standard English; and (3) they must agree to move students toward observation of actual usage through presenting them with a "practical equipment" for this purpose.[41]

Social pressure will necessarily support a certain standard of speech practices. It is not the duty of the schools, according to Fries, to impose artificial restraints upon usage, nor to fix the language. Only the support of real social pressure will contribute to the success of a language program. "It must be the vigorous social pressure of a living speech, the forms of which can be constantly verified upon the lips of actual speakers."[42] For the schools, this social pressure can be enlisted in support of the learning of informal Standard English. The body of Fries' book dramatically demonstrated the fallacy of much teaching in imposing artificial barriers between Standard and Vulgar English. Many items which the schools labored to eliminate from the speech of students appear with frequency in the language of educated, intelligent speakers. To persist in such teaching is "a waste of time, of resources—a waste that is harmful in view of the many important things to be taught."[43]

On the positive side, Fries suggested that schools must attempt to provide students with the tools for accurate observation of language as it is used. Since it is impossible to deal with every language situation which may arise in the life of a speaker, the teacher should be concerned with preparing the student for "independent growth" through an awareness of the elements with which his language is built—inflections, function words, and word order.

> It is in these respects that the various sets of language habits differ, and only insofar as the pupil can thus refer any given usage to the pattern has he the equipment necessary to make intelligent observations and decisions for himself."

Upon such new grammar, Fries based his hope for a successful language program in the schools.

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[41] *Ibid.*, pp. 289-292.
[42] *Ibid.*, p. 290.
[43] *Ibid.*, p. 291.
[44] *Ibid.*, p. 292.

The years following the publication of Fries' *American English Grammar* were war years. And in these years grammar took a secondary place in the pages of the *English Journal* to the English teacher's attempt to justify his position in a nation at war. Nationalism is evidenced by an address of a president of the NCTE, appearing in the *Journal* in February of 1942. Robert C. Pooley spoke of "One People, One Language." "We can be proud," he said, "that English is a free language untrammeled by an academy or other governing body."[45] With the advantage of one language uniting the people of the country, Pooley stressed the size and flexibility of our vocabulary and the simplicity of our grammar. He proposed an attitude of mind which would look upon the decline of inflections and the general simplifications as improvements which strengthen language rather than corruptions which weaken it.

Other contributors, as in other years, deplored the disparity between theory and practice in textbooks ("Just as long as we ignore linguistic and psychological advances will we continue to drill on 'Are you he?' ")[46] and in the classroom ("Formal, written grammar drill is misappropriation of time.").[47] Despite this deplorable disparity, the National Council of Teachers of English had been for several years consistent in its attempts to eliminate harmful and futile teaching by a presentation of the facts of language usage. Through Council-supported publications, the NCTE advocated the liberal attitude toward English.

Soon after the publication of *Facts about Current English Usage*, a section of the monthly publication of the *English Journal* entitled "Current English Forum" was devoted to answering questions of National Council members. P. G. Perrin, A. H. Marckwardt, and J. B. McMillan were the forum, and questions on punctuation, vocabulary, and grammar were answered by them in the light of current usage. Typical of the attitude expressed by the forum and consistent with the aims of the Council is the following answer to a reader's question concerning the correct use of *don't* and *doesn't*.

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[45]Robert C. Pooley, "One People, One Language," *EJ*, 31 (February 1942), 110-120.

[46]Russell Cooper, "English in Textbooks," *EJ*, 31 (September 1942), 552-556.

[47]Maureen Faulkner, "Theory—and Practice," *EJ*, 32 (December 1943), 557-560.

> The forms *don't* and *doesn't* in the third person singular are rival forms, differing in connotation. Both are very old, both widespread among native English speakers, both immediately intelligible, both "pure" English (in sound, formation, meaning, history). There is, however, in certain groups a prejudice against *don't*; the speaker will find this a handicap to him (exactly as he will find "bad" table manners a handicap) in these groups.[45]

The knowledge that such an "enlightened" attitude toward the language was possible in 1943 contrasts with the suspicion that the average English teacher in the average high school today would be incapable of such an answer.

Indeed, in a recent visit to a high school on Chicago's South Side, I was disconcerted to find that such a thing as formal grammar, which, as subject of much controversy, had been judged inappropriate for high school study as much as twenty years ago, is still very much a part of the curriculum. When questioned about the teaching of grammar, the teachers answered in complete ignorance of not so recent scholarship and discussion. The presentation of grammar, in this particular school, occupies 50 percent of all English instruction. It is still taught from texts which encourage the use of: "Whom is that for?" "One can have a good time in one's own home," "Everybody went to the circus all dressed up in his Sunday clothes," and "There was a good reason for his declining the invitation." Rules of grammar occupy an integral part of the texts: "The verb *to be* and other linking verbs take the same case after them as before them," "The subjunctive mood is preferred for a wish and for a condition that is contrary to fact," "To express futurity, use *shall* in the first person and *will* in the second and third persons." English teachers, it seems, could benefit from attention to their professional journal and an eighteenth century admonition from Pope:

> Be not the first by whom the new are tried,
> Nor yet the last to lay the old aside.

Both have long been ignored.

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[45] "Current English Forum," *EJ*, 42 (November 1943), 519-520.

## 1945-1954

Doris C. Meyers

In his presidential address to the 1953 convention of the National Council of Teachers of English in Los Angeles, Harlen M. Adams referred to that year as one of "transition and renascence." Though he was speaking of more immediate concerns of the Council, his phrase is admirably suited to describe the entire decade 1945-1954 in relation to the teaching of English. The period is one of uneasy and often confused transition. Beginning almost eight months before V-J Day and ending a year after the Korean War and three years before the first Sputnik, it was a time in which the NCTE and English teachers in general were preoccupied with many urgent but not always strictly academic concerns. A glance at the titles of articles and the topical indexes in the *English Journal* for this period will reveal the prevailing interests and attitudes: training in democracy, intercultural and human relationships, veteran education, audiovisual arts and mass communications, "listening," coordinated or "core" communication courses, racial and religious tolerance, the socio-psychological significance of literature and its functional applications, broadened and remedial reading programs, "basic" English—all these and similar topics occupy at least as much space in the *Journal* from 1945 through 1954 as do articles on specific matters of usage and linguistics.

Mr. Lightner closed his survey of the attitude of the NCTE toward grammar in the years 1930-1945 by referring to the number of articles which continued to appear in the *Journal* deploring the disparity between advanced grammatical theory and actual practices in the teaching of English. This humanly inevitable "gap" remained fixed and continued to be deplored throughout the postwar decade 1945-1954.

In the March issue of the *Journal* a section gives an account of the 1946 NCTE convention in Atlantic City, the first "unrestricted" convention in five years.[1] According to Samuel Withers, who wrote part of this account, the prevailing attitude was both "defensive and utilitarian." The convention's theme was "English for These Times," and there was a heavily pragmatic stress on such topics as "Indoctrinating for the Democratic Way of Life" and "Developing Personality through

[1] "Convention Impressions," *English Journal*, 36 (March 1947), 141-146.

Literature." Various comments on the speeches and discussions reveal a state of inevitable postwar disillusion with the actualities of a precarious peace, atomic fears, and a general uncertainty as to the direction that the teaching of English should take in the years ahead. One vigorously prophetic note was struck by Charles C. Fries in his convention speech on "Implications of Modern Linguistic Science."[2] He spoke of the "new world" of structural linguistics and discussed its history from the beginning of the nineteenth century, the continuous and accelerated rate of development in research, various techniques of structural analysis for descriptive study of language, and possible applications of this study "to all the features of language." Regarding this last point he predicted:

> Structural linguistics with its vigorous technique is revealing much that is of significance for many of our practical problems. It is the kind of analysis that lies back of our new approach to the teaching of English as a foreign language and other foreign language teaching to English-speaking students.[3]

It is appropriate that the major NCTE project of these years was the massive English Curriculum Study which occupied the time and energies of many of its members from its inception in 1946 to the publication in May 1952 of Volume I of *The English Language Arts* (Appleton-Century-Crofts). This study was undertaken because of a recognized need for a reexamination of both content and techniques in the teaching of English. When the project was first proposed at the Columbus convention in 1944, Porter G. Perrin predicted that if it were "thoroughly successful, it [might] influence American society profoundly."[4]

At this same convention a resolution was passed against the increasing pressures from outside to deemphasize English in the school curriculum. Members were concerned with what they felt to be a loss of identity because of the increasing tendency to merge the study of English into the realm of the social sciences—particularly in the secondary schools. However, the convention also discussed and made specific recommendations toward coordinating what was called the "communication arts." In an article reporting on this development[5] three Council

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[2]C. C. Fries, "Implications of Modern Linguistic Science," *College English*, 8 (March 1947), 314-320.

[3]*Ibid.*, pp. 318-319.

[4]"The Columbus Meeting," *EJ*, 34 (February 1945), 106.

publications on this subject are mentioned: "What Communication Means Today," "Junior High School English in War-time and After," and "Skill in Listening." The possibility of coordinating English more fully with speech, music, and art was considered, and it was agreed that "communication is basic to everything man does."[6]

"Is English Needed?" was the title of the April 1945 editorial by W. Wilbur Hatfield. In this and subsequent editorials, Mr. Hatfield recognized the "insecurity" of English in the high school curriculum of that time and declared that the prevailing notion "that every teacher is a teacher of English" is, at best, a "half-truth."[7] The problem as it emerged from his editorials, other *Journal* articles, and letters from teachers involved in the situation seemed to be one of indecision as to what "content" was to be taught under the aegis of English since so many of the old grammatical verities had been questioned, and as to *which* teachers and *what* courses were best fitted to convey the necessary "communication skills" of reading, speech, writing, and listening. (Throughout most of this period "listening" was regarded as a discipline separate from though related to the more traditional aspects of communication. The all-enveloping concept of the function of English teachers was stretched to include a monitoring of mass media.) Mr. Hatfield's September 1945 editorial[8] discussed the loss of values that he believed resulted from the complete fusion of English into other courses. He announced that subsequent *Journals* would continue to print articles and letters both pro and con regarding this issue. This dialogue—heavily weighted on the "con" side—continued to dominate the curriculum controversy for the next two years.

In January 1945 Robert Pooley published an advance article on his NCTE monograph No. 16, *Teaching English Usage* (which appeared in 1946).[9] In it he discussed three "factors" of communication: (1) the meaning to be communicated, (2) the intention or purpose of the comunication, and (3) the tone or effect desired in the communication.[10] He regarded details of usage as strictly "functional" to the

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[6]Lennox Grey, "Co-ordinating the Communication Arts," *EJ*, 34 (June 1945), 315-320.

[6]*Ibid.*, p. 320.

[7]W. W. Hatfield, "Is English Needed?" *EJ*, 34 (April 1945), p. 214.

[8]"The Editor Reflects," *EJ*, 34 (September 1945), 389-390.

[9]Discussed by H. L. Mencken, "Mencken on Pooley on Usage," *EJ*, 37 (October 1948), 440.

[10]Robert Pooley, "Communication and Usage," *EJ*, 34 (January 1945), 16-19.

promotion of these factors and concluded that the emphasis in high school and college teaching must be shifted from "negative rules to positive insights."[11]

In September 1946, about the time that the comprehensive Council study of the English curriculum was getting under way, the "Books" section of the *Journal* reviewed a more limited study called *The Emerging Curriculum of English in the Secondary School.*[12] The reviewer, Lucia B. Mirrielees, refers back to the pioneer NCTE curriculum reorganization of 1917 and to the many intervening bulletins on the subject. This study—consisting of twenty-five articles—stressed the difficulty of educating pupils "beyond their cultural level" in a society "not certain of its cultural values."[13] Six ideas dominate this study and recur continually in the *Journal* articles of this period: (1) effective speech is more important than correct speech; (2) there should be "democratic" teacher-pupil planning of work around "centers of interest"; (3) there should be a stress on logical thinking, grasp of connotations, and precision of language; (4) there must be much practice of usage in allied communication skills—"based upon oral training in functional grammar";[14] (5) reading should be done at the appropriate level; and (6) English can be correlated with other subject matter, but only "when the unique province of English is not sacrificed too seriously."[15]

In the May 1946 issue, Margaret M. Bryant's *A Functional English Grammar* was hailed by reviewer Harold B. Allen as "the most significant textbook since Albert H. Marckwardt's unique *Introduction to the English Language.*"[16] His only critical reservations were that she included a chapter on phonics and did not "unreservedly" accept the findings of the scientific grammarians.

Dora V. Smith, the director of the NCTE Curriculum Study, made her first progress report at the 1946 convention.[17] The chief goal of

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[11]*Ibid.*

[12]*Bulletin of the National Association of Sunday* [sic] *School Principals*, XXX, 136 (February 1946).

[13]As quoted in "Books," *EJ*, 35 (September 1946), 412.

[14]"Books," *EJ*, 35 (September 1946), 412.

[15]*Ibid.*

[16]"Books," *EJ*, 35 (May 1946), 281-282.

[17]Dora V. Smith, "The Progress of the NCTE Curriculum Study," *EJ*, 36 (February 1947), 66-73.

the study, she stated, was "to practice in the classroom what we profess in theory."[18] She discussed the organization, the problems, and the platform of the study. Some committees had been organized "vertically" on the basis of various "aspects of the language arts" (i.e., reading, literature, writing, speaking, and listening).[19] The chief problem faced by the "vertical" committees was the achievement of articulation in their separate areas throughout all grades from kindergarten to graduate school. In addition there was a "horizontal" committee representing every level of the school system and including six "resource persons" from different geographical areas who were concerned with "evaluating and implementing the program at their level of instruction."[20] Three problems of organization that Dr. Smith reported as remaining at this stage were (1) how to attain continuity within the program; (2) how to attain continuity of growth for the individual student; and (3) how to bring about "integration of the language arts" with all the situations in which pupils use language in home, school, and community. In addition to these three problems was the one that Dr. Smith called "the final problem": the relation of the English curriculum to the adequate training of teachers.

The working platform of the group covered thirty-six pages, according to Dr. Smith, and was concerned with a general statement of principles and their projected approach to the problems of grammar, usage, reading, etc. A primary assumption was that school programs grow out of the social philosophy and needs of the times and should be tailored to fit the individual. "By giving large emphasis to spiritual values,"[21] the group hoped to offset the mechanistic tendencies of the day. They believed that one means to this end was training in the power to use mass media intelligently. The mastery of language was considered "indispensable." The committee dealing with usage stressed the importance of discovering the current forms of usage, introducing them gradually to students, and—in all cases—avoiding using them as ends rather than as means to expression. The commission was asked to distinguish carefully between the findings of grammatical science and the rules of usage, and to define all grammatical terms *specifically*. (Throughout this period there are frequent

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[18] *Ibid.*, p. 66.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 69.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 70.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 67.

complaints in the *Journal* about confusions in grammatical terminology—what, in one article, was called "Grammarian's Gobbledygook.")[22] Not only were they to distinguish structural linguistics from the study of usage; they were also asked to examine carefully all evidence on the relationship between the two and to determine what should be the function of each at "successive levels of education."

The progress of the curriculum study was reported each year at the NCTE convention, and these reports appeared as articles in subsequent issues of the *Journal.* In March 1948 Dr. Smith discussed some "Basic Considerations" that must be taken into account by curriculum makers in a country "committed to the principles of democracy."[23] One of these was the difficulty of determining a learning sequence which was based "on natural patterns of growth"; another was the problem of providing for individual differences while at the same time "recognizing the essential unity of the peoples of a democracy."[24] She indicated that the committees approved of continuing curriculum interrelations among the language arts and that they would stress the importance of accepting and following the findings of modern grammatical research.

In February 1951 the *Journal* published "A Curriculum in the Language Arts for Life Today," which was the annual progress report given at the previous convention in 1950. Dr. Smith stated that the commission was receiving more questions about grammar than about anything else. She indicated their position when she declared that an "inordinate amount of time on . . . so-called 'correct usage' . . . precludes the possibility of developing an idea-centered curriculum."[25] Teachers of English, she continued, should emphasize the observation of the English language as spoken and written and "should tend to eliminate those elements of Latin grammar which for years have been presented as if they were characteristic of English."[26]

In May 1952, after six years of exhaustive research, the commission published Volume I of their findings, entitling it *The English*

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[22]Ollie Depew and Edith Bork, "Grammarian's Gobbledygook," *EJ,* 39 (September 1950), 393ff.

[23]"Basic Considerations in Curriculum-making in the Language Arts," *EJ,* 37 (March 1948), 115.

[24]*Ibid.,* p. 126.

[25]Dora V. Smith, "A Curriculum in the Language Arts for Life Today," *EJ,* 40 (February 1951), 84.

[26]*Ibid.,* p. 85.

*Language Arts* (Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1952). In her report to the NCTE convention in Boston that year, Dora Smith explained that this title was chosen because the term "communications" had become "controversial on the college level," and the representatives of the various stages of education did not all mean the same thing when they used the term "English."[27] The reactions to the study were immediate, voluble, and varied. Both the *English Journal* and *College English* printed cross sections of the responses from classroom teachers. These ranged in degrees of enthusiasm from hailing it as "a Magna Carta at midcentury"[28] to rejecting it as "impractical and extremist."[29] Also in October 1953 *Journal* Ruth Wallerstein published a somewhat critical though objective article on the study, in which she reminded members of that "it is still only a report, not a dogma."[30] W. W. Hatfields's February 1953 editorial stated that Chapter Twelve of the report, which dealt with linguistic grammar and the social bases of usage, was causing some "very warm" debate.[31]

The recommendations in the study were directed toward achieving a thoroughgoing functionalism in every aspect of the teaching of English. "The careful individualization of instruction" was particularly stressed.[32] Alfred Ames, critical of this emphasis, quoted a relevant passage from page 40 of *The English Language Arts*:

> . . . begin the work of each new year or division of the school by determining just where each student is in each important area of language development.

and went on to declare flatly that such a policy simply would not work, and "incalculable harm can be done by pretending that it will work and is working."[33] However, Rachel Salisbury believed that "the direct and unequivocal stand for a growth philosophy of teaching English"[34]

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[27] "*The English Language Arts*: A Link between Yesterday and Tomorrow," *EJ*, 42 (February 1953), 77.

[28] Rachel Salisbury, "Mastery or Growth?" *CE*, 14 (November 1952), 89.

[29] Alfred Ames, "The Dangers of Extremism," *CE*, 14 (November 1952), 92.

[30] "The Report of the Commission on the Curriculum: A Criticism," *EJ*, 42 (October 1953), 371.

[31] W. W. Hatfield, "A Confused Issue," *EJ*, 42 (February 1953), 91.

[32] Lois Anne Dilley, "Give Him Some Stars to Steer By," *EJ*, 41 (September 1952), 363.

[33] Ames, *loc. cit.*

[34] Salisbury, *loc. cit.*

did not mean "discarding mastery completely," but rather subordinating an emphasis on mastery to one on individual development. She cited the armed forces G.E.D. college entrance tests for returning veterans as a proof that potential "power" can be tested.[35]

There were equally divergent reactions to the commission's recommendations that literature be related more closely to life and that reading requirements be flexibly adapted to the individual. Both Alfred Ames and Ruth Wallerstein pleaded for the continued arbitrary requirement of the study of certain great literary works in, as Ames phrased it, "the statistically univerifiable hope that some of it may fall on fertile ground."[36] Miss Wallerstein believed that the report did not sufficiently "distinguisn literature from propaganda," and, in general, "leave[s] it seriously in doubt whether we are more than handmaids of the social sciences."[37] She went on to question various other aspects of the report: the emphasis on group "projects," which she believed would tend "to stifle all creative initiative";[38] the bracketing of "listening" as a separate discipline; the confusion of an "integrated" curriculum with an "undifferentiated" one; and the recommendation that English teachers spend time critically analyzing mass media rather than merely counteracting their "shoddy pressures." In fact, she asserted that "most of what is most significant and most characteristic in a democratic society will best be communicated indirectly."[39]

It was inevitable that so ambitious and comprehensive a study—involving a historical survey of the language arts, a "refresher course in the pedagogy of English,"[40] and a presentation of the most advanced educational theories of psychology, aesthetics, linguistics, and semantics—should arouse considerable interest and controversy. Oscar Cargill called the report "required reading," and "the first adequate survey of our profession."[41] Dora V. Smith, who had directed the arduous job, placed the report in its historical context in her statement to the NCTE. She referred to pronouncements on the teaching

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[35]*Ibid.*

[36]Ames, *loc. cit.*

[37]Wallerstein, *op. cit.*, p. 372.

[38]*Ibid.*, p. 375.

[39]*Ibid.*

[40]Joseph Gallant, "Some Impressions," *EJ*, 41 (September 1952), 363.

[41]Oscar Cargill, "Required Reading," *CE*, 14 (November 1952), 88.

of English made as early as 1831, and gave special emphasis to developments within the Council itself. She quoted approvingly the statement in the first issue of the *English Journal* that "a social aim had been substituted for an academic one; a democratic purpose for an aristocratic point of view. . . ."[42] She reminded her audience of how the NCTE had continued working in this direction through the intervening years. The twofold character of this curriculum study was social as well as linguistic: she said that emphasis on social cooperation was "inescapable in 1952."[43] The report on linguistics, she continued, was based on extensive research and written by an "eminent linguist," while the section on the application of these principles in actual teaching was written by one holding to what Dr. Smith called the "middle ground." The controversial chapter on linguistics had been mimeographed in advance, sent to all members of the commission, and thoroughly debated before its inclusion in the published report. However, as Mr. Hatfield's editorial indicated, these precautions did not protect it against inevitable disagreements and dissent among its readers.

Charles C. Fries' seminal book on linguistics, *The Structure of English* (Harcourt, Brace, 1952), appeared almost simultaneously with Volume I of *The English Language Arts*. There is a certain ironic juxtaposition in the emphasis on a completely functional and experience-centered curriculum advocated in the commission's report and Luella Cook's conviction that Fries' book has laid the "foundation for a new scientific grammar"[44] which, she believed, would reverse the twenty-year trend toward such curricula and direct the teaching of English toward a new content:

> . . . soon we shall no longer need to try to teach grammar functionally. The new grammar *is* functional; it's based on the concept of function, and to teach it at all is *to be* functional.[45]

Fries' book was also hailed by Karl Dykema in the November 1952 issue of *College English*.[46] Dykema pointed out that its great

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[42]Quoted in Dora V. Smith, "*The English Language Arts*: A Link between Yesterday and Tomorrow," *EJ*, 42 (February 1953), 75.

[43]*Ibid.*

[44]Luella B. Cook, "The End of the Trail," *EJ*, 41 (December 1952), 540.

[45]*Ibid.*, p. 543.

[46]Karl Dykema, "Progress in Grammar," *CE*, 14 (November 1952), 93-100.

value lay not in its originality, but rather in the fact that for the first time a scientific linguist had presented to the

> 'educated lay reader, [including] teachers in our schools and colleges,' a description of the structure of English that the lay reader can read and which will give him a considerably more complete understanding of how English works than any comparable book.[47]

Miss Cook did not believe that the work could be used as a classroom text until it had been thoroughly assimilated by teachers, but Burnet MacCurdy in a letter and an article in *College English* (April and October 1954) enthusiastically described his success in teaching "Fries' criteria" to a selected group of college freshmen. He reported that his students "found no special difficulty" in understanding and applying the insights of structural grammar as Fries had presented them in his book.[48]

In an earlier *Journal* article Luella Cook had complained of "too much wait and see"[49] in the purely functional approach to the teaching of grammar. She rebelled against being asked to make a choice between "chaos and order"; her solution then was a judicious merging of the functional and the logical approaches "in relation to each other."[50] In 1952, after reading Fries, she writes that

> What excites me most about the book is the feeling that it marks the end of a long trek through the woods and the discovery that the trail led somewhere.[51]

"The Current English Forum," a monthly feature of the *English Journal*, provides the best example of the Council's prevailing objective viewpoint in matters of usage and linguistics. Such editors as Harold B. Allen, Adeline Bartlett, Margaret Bryant, Archibald Hill, James McMillan, Kemp Malone, and Russell Thomas answered specific questions about grammar and language, reviewed books such as Mencken's supplements to *The American Language*, or defended their lin-

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[47] *Ibid.*, p. 99.

[48] Burnet MacCurdy, "Structural Grammar in English 101," *CE*, 15 (April 1954), 412-413, and "Structural Syntax on the Blackboard," *CE*, 16 (October 1954), 38-43.

[49] Luella B. Cook, "A Dual Approach to Grammar Study," *EJ*, 34 (March 1945), 123.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 126.

[51] Luella B. Cook, "The End of the Trail," 41 (December 1952), 543.

guistic position in articles like "The Descriptive Grammarian's Point of View" (September 1945) or "Anything Goes" (May 1951)—the latter answering Mario Pei's charge in his *Story of Language* (J. B. Lippincott Co., 1949) that their doctrine of usage gives *carte blanche* to substandard forms. Their position was consistently relativistic and inductive. They said that there were no "tablets of stone"—"no one right way" in matters of usage. In answer to reader protests against too many "yes-no" replies they declared characteristically:

> If the facts of usage are hard to handle in the classroom, then the classroom must be accommodated to the facts; the language cannot be modified to suit the classroom.[52]

There were repeated pleas in the "Current English Forum" as well as in various *Journal* articles that the students themselves be trained to become intelligent observers of language usage, though cautioned to avoid "random and unrestricted observation."[53] One tendency of this period was to stress the psychological bases and effects of language. The editors of the "Forum" seemed to be resorting to popular psychology in their answer to the ubiquitous "It is I-me" controversy (April 1948). They commented that you may "incur the dislike" of language purists if you say "It is me," but "on the other hand, saying 'It's I' will prejudice many other people against you . . ."[54] There were also frequent references to their grammatical opponents in such terms as the "new rich" (March 1949), or "the old guard" (a borrowing from Mencken). A typical example of their tendency to assume all their opponents were "eighteenth Latinate diehards" is found in the April 1950 "Forum":

> The practice of the English language has once again triumphed over Latin grammar. I can see no value in casting stones at the host of excellent English writers and speakers . . . who . . . have found the peculiar ways of English not only just as good as those of Latin but better.[55]

In his editorial "What Standards of Usage?" in the February 1949 issue, W. Wilbur Hatfield was less sweeping in his discussion of modern usage "dissidents." He divided them into at least two categories:

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[52]"Current English Forum," *EJ*, 34 (January 1945), 46.

[53]"Current English Forum," *EJ*, 35 (January 1946), 49.

[54]"Current English Forum," *EJ*, 37 (April 1948), 203.

[55]"Current English Forum," *EJ*, 39 (April 1950), 278.

the aforementioned "intellectual descendents of the eighteenth century classicists," who, he said, have "given little study to the history of English and do not know that all living languages change"; and another group, "better informed and more reasonable,"[56] among whom he included Philip Clark Gucker, who had published a provocative article in the January 1949 issue called "A Dissenting Opinion on Language Trends." Mr. Gucker dissented in particular from the opinion expressed by Karl Dykema in the September 1947 *English Journal* regarding the "dangerous waste of prescriptive grammatical teaching."[57] Dykema had stated flatly that "the function of linguistic training for the prospective high school teacher is primarily negative: to teach him to let well enough alone. For most children the mastery of standard language is not important."[58] Mr. Gucker raised several pertinent but not dogmatic objections to this view. He pointed out that there had been great improvements in every branch of teaching except in training our students in the "clear, accurate expression" of their ideas. "The classroom has become a part of the community and of the world. But in the midst of all these exciting developments we continue to turn out graduates who . . . have not learned to speak or write acceptable English."[59]

This pragmatic objection to the results of extreme language permissiveness is not an isolated instance. It is typical of scattered but increasing protests: in May 1945 J. C. Tressler wrote that high school graduates were "deficient in fundamentals," and that drill is necessary not only in sports but in writing. In the September issue of that same year,[60] Lehman A. Hoefler reviewed the current charges that high school graduates were deficient in English and admitted that such charges were largely true. He then went on to make certain specific recommendations—once again drill, especially in grades 7-12. Nearly a decade later, in the September *Journal* of 1954, appeared a vigorous letter, "Are English Teachers Afraid?" by S. Vanderwerf of North-

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[56]W. Wilbur Hatfield, "What Standards of Usage?" *EJ*, 38 (February 1949), 95.

[57]Karl Dykema, "A Dual Approach to Grammar Study," *EJ*, 34 (March 1945), 123.

[58]*Ibid.*

[59]Philip Clark Gucker, "A Dissenting Opinion on Language Trends," *EJ*, 38 (January 1949), 24.

[60]Lehman A. Hoefler, "Redirection or Return to Direction in the Teaching of English," *EJ*, 34 (September 1945), 372-375.

western University, in which he repeated the same recurring charge "that high school graduates simply cannot use their own language effectively in speech and writing."[61] Mr. Vanderwerf's solution was *not* a return to "eighteenth century Latin grammar" but rather to "regular and frequent reading, writing, and speaking."[62] In the same issue Richard M. Bossone's article "Let's Talk Sense about English" insisted that the actual teaching of *language* must be placed "in the center of the English Program,"[63] and that all other activities in English courses should be "directly connected with the study of language."[64] As Miss Russell's NCTE study for the years 1955-1963 shows, these pragmatic protests continue down to the present and have resulted in the growing demand for a return to the direct teaching of grammar—albeit a new sort of grammar.

When Gucker raised his dissenting voice in 1949, he could declare that very few "stand in the face of this liberating gale and calmly question where it is taking us."[65] Mr. Gucker's appeal was not for a rejection of new knowledge but for more scientific research—balanced by "a thoughtful weighing of logical considerations, and [an] appreciation of aesthetic considerations, also."[66] These last qualities he claimed to find in A. G. Kennedy's *English Usage* (Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1942). Mr. Gucker reviewed and evaluated from his own viewpoint all five of the "National Council studies that have become the pentateuch of the linguistic bible": S. A. Leonard's *Current English Usage* (NCTE, 1932); A. H. Marckwardt and F. G. Walcott's *Facts about Current English Usage* (Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1938); Charles C. Fries' *American English Grammar* (Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1940); A. G. Kennedy's *English Usage*; and R. C. Pooley's *Teaching English Usage* (Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1946). He illustrated the prevalence of disagreement even in these five modern studies by charting the discrepancies in their pronouncements on eight selected grammatical constructions.[67] His point was not to object that such differences

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[61] S. Vanderwerf, "Are English Teachers Afraid?" *EJ*, 43 (September 1954), 321.

[62] *Ibid.*

[63] Richard Bossone, "Let's Talk Sense about English," *EJ*, 43 (October 1954), 373.

[64] *Ibid.*, p. 371.

[65] Gucker, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

[66] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[67] *Ibid.*, p. 24.

existed but to stress his thesis that English teachers should and must exercise individual judgment; that when they are forced to "suspend judgment the result is confusion."[68] Gucker complained of the lack of adequate scientific controls in the five studies, and cited the fact that in the Marckwardt and Walcott book some judgments were based on dictionary rulings which, he says, have "no more the effect of absolute force than have the 'traditional pronouncements' against which the linguists hurl themselves."[69] He also questioned the accuracy of Pooley's "selected quotation method" unless balanced by more careful controls than had previously been used. Fries, he believed, established better control "by limiting his material and making a count of the constructions used";[70] and he noted that Fries came to "more conservative" conclusions than Marckwardt, Walcott, or Pooley. He called the Fries study "learned and important," but pointed out certain limitations even in this basic work.

W. W. Hatfield's editorial response to this article was to make an appeal for more extensive Council research: "the issue is important enough to warrant the expenditure of some time and money upon its determination."[71]

Robert C. Pooley, writing on the "Contributions of Research to the Teaching of English," distinguished among three different types of research and gave a brief historical sketch of the developments of each type: (1) research toward the qualitative measurement of writing ability; (2) research toward quantitative and qualitative standards of English usage; and (3) research to determine the current status of English instruction. Regarding the first type, Pooley's conclusion was that no available tests adequately measure ability in composition: "the judgment of the experienced teacher is at present a more valid measure of composition skill than are any of the present English tests."[72] The qualitative study of usage, however, had greatly affected English teaching, but not to the degree that it should have. The third type of research (e.g., Dora Smith's *Instruction in English*) had dis-

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[68] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[69] *Ibid.*

[70] *Ibid.*

[71] W. W. Hatfield, "What Standards of Usage?" *EJ*, 38 (February 1948), 96.

[72] Robert C. Pooley, "Contributions of Research to the Teaching of English," *EJ*, 37 (April 1948), 171-172.

closed a huge gap between aims and practice in English instruction. Pooley concluded that the NCTE

> should bend every effort toward the continuation and extension of research. . . . [it should use] every means available to make the results of research . . . known to teachers as early as possible . . .[73]

Four years and even six years later, Mr. Pooley was still reiterating and amplifying these same points. In his 1951 address before the NCTE convention he argued for "Publicizing Our Aims." He pointed out that whenever the public attacks education the teaching of English is always a prime target, perhaps because "our failures tend to be more conspicuous than our successes."[74] He cautioned against allowing the enlargement in English content and procedure to "result in scattered aims." There must not only be agreement among ourselves, he said, but "we must make clear to our associates in education and to the general public what we consider fundamental and the reasons behind our use of materials and methods."[75]

In 1953, in an address before the NCTE convention, Mr. Pooley reported on "Grammar in the Schools of Today." He said that "the teaching of grammar as a part of English instruction in elementary and high schools has not changed greatly in the last ten years and shows no sign at the moment of rapid change in the years ahead."[76] He compared our clinging to an outmoded grammar to our dogged retention of the English system of weights and measures "despite the more scientific foundations of the metric system." More hopefully, he saw

> an earnest effort at all levels to discover the most productive uses of grammar in the teaching of English language . . . a shift in point of view toward grammar from what may be called the "subject" position to what may be called the "tool" position."[77]

After amplifying this statement, he went on to make specific recommendations for the teaching of grammar at the various levels

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[73] *Ibid.*, p. 175.

[74] Robert C. Pooley, "Publicizing Our Aims," *EJ*, 41 (March 1952), 122.

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 123.

[76] Robert C. Pooley, "Grammar in the Schools of Today," *EJ*, 43 (March 1952), 122.

[77] *Ibid.*

of the school system. He concluded that this instruction must be directed toward developing the students' ability to derive principles inductively and to apply these principles to the correction and improvement of their own writing.

In November 1954, Martin S. Shockley reflected in the *English Journal* on the more than forty years that the NCTE had been in existence and pointed to various Council accomplishments. Among recent ones that he cited were the recently completed *Dictionary of American English*[78] and the yet incomplete Linguistic Atlas—both of them "monuments and guideposts in modern linguistic scholarship."[79] At the same time he admitted that "the numerous unsolved problems of English teaching" which were the original reasons for the organization of the NCTE were "remarkably similar to those we face today."[80]

Some of these problems were stated explicitly by Robert Pooley in 1952 in his plea for a better transmission of the facts of the English curriculum to the public:

> For three or more decades the National Council of Teachers of English has encouraged, sponsored, and financed important researches in grammar. We know by objective investigation what grammar will do and what it will not do. . . . But these facts, all available in print, many of them for a decade or more, are not known generally by teachers of English; they are unknown or ignored by many who train teachers, and they are deliberately avoided by those who publish textbooks. . . . No story is more exciting than the successful battle of the National Council of Teachers of English to liberalize the teaching of English usage. . . . we have secured, at length, a partial acceptance of the truths about language which every linguist takes for granted. But the battle is not yet won.[81]

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[78]The *Dictionary of American English* was first mentioned in the June 1951 issue of *English Journal* when Margaret Bryant asked for the help and advice of Council members in compiling it.

[79]Martin S. Shockley, "After Forty," *EJ*, 43 (November 1954), 449.

[80]*Ibid.*, p. 446.

[81]Robert C. Pooley, "Publicizing Our Aims," *ibid.*, p. 125.

# 1955-1963

Geraldine Russell

The attitude of the NCTE toward language was, by 1955, quite clearly defined. The Committee on Current English Usage answered questions raised in the "Current English" section of the *English Journal*. The answers are concrete examples of decisions based primarily on language usage. Sometimes the opinion of authorities such as the *OED* is added. If the word under debate has been used frequently by cultivated speakers and writers, then it is acceptable: this is the final, irrefutable argument in all grammatical disputes.

> The use of *contact* in the sense of "get in touch with" or "meet" is frowned upon by many people, but despite the objections it is being greatly used. One hears on the radio and television and sees in such widely distributed magazines as *Life* and *Time* statements of this kind: "Contact your Frigidaire dealer today. . . ." From the business world this usage has made its way into all walks of life and since it serves a definite purpose those who oppose it are fighting a losing battle.[1]

A historical approach is used whenever the writer wishes to defend the use of a word which has been in the language for a length of time, and all possible effort is made to relate individual usage problems to general linguistic patterns. The Committee on Current English Usage does not hesitate to prescribe any usage it feels has not yet become acceptable:

> At the present moment, however, the use of *awful* as an adverb in the sense [very bad] is nonstandard. . . . In a reading of more than thirty thousand pages in recent newspapers, magazines, books of criticism, novels and plays, only nine instances of *awful* occurred, three of which were the literary meaning [full of awe] employed in literary works. The other six occurrences were in dialogue of ordinary, everyday conversations.[2]

The committee clearly states its standard of acceptability: evidence of use in "newspapers, magazines, including *Life* and *Time*, books of

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[1]"Current English," *EJ*, 44 (January 1955), 42. In 1961 the Committee on Current English Usage gave way to a broader Commission on the English Language, whose first chairman was W. Nelson Francis.

[2]"Current English," *EJ*, 44 (February 1955), 102.

criticism, novels and plays." If research indicates divided opinion, the committee says so and refuses to judge until further evidence is provided:

> However, before we can reach solid conclusions, we need much careful quantitative research, research which gathers its records from the spontaneous utterances that constitute our language.[3]

The committee always makes a clear distinction between the levels of English:

> Since *liable* is so often employed in the place of *likely* by both the cultured and the uncultured, it may soon pass from the colloquial, informal stage to formal written English.[4]

W. Wilbur Hatfield answers a question challenging the basis of many of the committee's decisions: "Why do so many 'experts' in linguistics base their studies of grammar and usage upon the spoken rather than the written language?" Hatfield answers that as speech precedes writing, writing is simply a translation of speech. The questioner should not, he says, group grammar and usage together; they are quite different.

> The grammar of a language is the system of inflections and word arrangements (and pauses and inflections of the voice?) which indicate the relationships of words within the sentences (and some of the relations of clauses, and the ends of sentences?). Usage includes also the variations from the basic patterns of the language and some nongrammatical matters.[5]

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[3] "Current English," *EJ*, 44 (March 1955), 165.

[4] "Current English," *EJ*, 44 (April 1955), 233.

[5] "Current English," *EJ*, 45 (October 1956), 423. The importance of the Linguistic Atlas project, even in its incomplete state, was recognized increasingly by the membership of the NCTE, which had been one of the first organizations to sponsor the project at its inauguration in 1939. Its value as a source on which judgments of usage might be more accurately based was pointed out particularly by Harold B. Allen in "The Linguistic Atlases: Our New Resources," *EJ*, 45 (April 1956), 188-194. In addition to seminal articles, five large-scale studies have been available to teachers and widely drawn upon: Hans Kurath, *A Word Geography of the Eastern United States* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1949); E. Bagby Atwood, *A Survey of Verb Forms in the Eastern United States* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1953); Virginia McDavid, *Verb Forms in the North-Central States and Upper Midwest* (Dissertation [microfilm], University of Minnesota, 1956); Kurath and R. I. McDavid, Jr., *The Pronunciation of English in the Atlantic States* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961); Atwood, *The Regional Vocabulary of Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962).

He firmly states the NCTE's policy of relativism:

> The veriest tyro talks of right and wrong usage by which he means standard and nonstandard usage. All serious students of usage recognize a number of social varieties of standard usage, such as colloquial, technical, sports, formal spoken, ordinary written, and edited language. Each of these is acceptable, and even preferable, in appropriate circumstances.[6]

The idea of levels of usage wil be supported, Hatfield says, by the "NCTE's dictionary of current usage now in preparation which will recognize nonstandard, colloquial, spoken, written, and edited English."[7]

The NCTE-sponsored *English Language Arts in the Secondary School* states that it espouses the policy of relativism with regard to language: relativism "has been characterized as the 'modern view of grammar and linguistics' and has been presented as the majority opinion of the Commission on the English Curriculum of the National Council of Teachers of English." The basic principles of relativism are equally clearly spelled out:

> (1) language changes constantly; (2) change is normal and represents not corruption but improvement; (3) spoken language is the language; (4) correctness rests upon usage; (5) all usage is relative.[8]

The NCTE, whatever its official position is toward the English language, has always shown itself eager to hear and publicize all aspects of the controversy; so a year by year survey of the contents of the *English Journal* reflects almost all possible opinions.

By 1955, the controversy over the old Latinate grammar had long ceased; instead there were clear indications that many teachers had

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[6] *Ibid.* p. 433.

[7] *Ibid.* Unfortunately, lack of financial support and competent editorial staff caused this project to be abandoned.

[8] Quoted in Charles V. Hartung, "Doctrines of English Usage," *EJ*, 45 (December 1956), 517. Although the NCTE was not spared the controversy attendant on the appearance of *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, it suffered relatively little from the shock of recognition that much of the public felt on the announcement of these principles as the basis for usage judgments in lexicography; they were an old story to the Council. In any event, splenetic outbursts against the *Third* were the exception in NCTE publications; the responsible and detailed reviews (James Sledd, *CE*, 23 [May 1962], 682-687; I. Willis Russell, *EJ*, 51 [May 1962], 331-334) were generally favorable, though far from uncritical.

stopped teaching grammar altogether because, first, many felt it had no real purpose unless "integrated" into real life situations, and, second, most teachers, while realizing the artificialities and limitations of the old grammar, were extremely dissatisfied and confused with the new.

This idea of "integrated" grammar is quite popular, and the *English Journal* contains many examples of its application. "It is axiomatic today that the teaching of usage should be done in functional situations," that is, in class discussions about certain topics such as family relationships.[9] Grammar should not be taught for its own sake but in order to teach students "so to control language that experience, reality as it is given us to know it, is not mutilated in its precarious passage through words."[10] One writer sees this integrated approach as the method of the future: the first two stages in grammatical instruction, that of grammatical rule and that of linguistic method, are "stages leading to the third," the "natural" approach taught by means of having students write about personal, natural subjects as they come up. This stage is supposed to take over about 1988.[11] In another article we are told that "To teach the grammar, in the sense of teaching discriminating usage in accordance with the idiom of the language, the teacher does not need to *teach* the terminology."[12] In spite of the popularity of this somewhat vague attitude toward grammar, teaching without terminology, in functional situations, the attitude that it is no longer fashionable to teach grammar as an end in itself failed to manifest itself in textbooks; a survey of the textbooks of the forties shows that "the study of grammar still seems to be considered an end in itself, rather than the means to the end of correct usage." "It seems that textbook authors have not caught up with the recent trends."[13] However, College Placement Tests indicate a turning away from formal grammar: they "are emphasizing ability to *use* language clearly and effectively, and are deemphasizing, almost to

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[9]Lena Manning, "Meeting Individual Needs in Usage," *EJ*, 44 (March 1955), 152.

[10]Louis Zahner, "The Teaching of Language," *EJ*, 44 (November 1955), 458.

[11]William D. Baker, "The Natural Method of Language Teaching," *EJ*, 47 (April 1958), 212.

[12]Donald R. Cain, "Grammar's Not Terminology," *EJ*, 47 (April 1958), 201.

[13]Mary Wood Dawson, "The Passing of the Pronoun," *EJ*, 45 (January 1956), 36.

the point of negation, the ability to classify grammatical forms in technical grammatical terms."[14]

There is relatively little doubt that the battle of usage has been won; very few teachers would deny that language may be properly used in many different ways. "There are only two kinds of English, standard and substandard. It is substandard, of course, that we must try to eradicate from both the students' speaking and writing. On the other hand, there are two varieties of standard English, the formal and the informal. Informal standard English is the language of personal and familiar communications and is not any the less pure because it contains a colloquialism now and then."[15] This is a conservative statement; it asserts the teacher's right to correct and eradicate the substandard, yet it clearly recognizes that an informal style is just as correct in the proper place as a formal.

Because the teaching of formal grammar and even the use of grammatical terminology in "functional situations" is frowned upon, teachers are confused; they are unsure about their duty. The confusion is clearly seen in the questions asked in the "Current English" section and in the many articles attempting to simplify and make comprehensible structural linguistics.

The first few voices raised in protest against this refusal to teach grammar are heard in 1957 and 1958. The protests center around the fact that students' writing ability has not improved since grammar has been dropped; the contrary some believe is true: students are only able to write informal not formal sentences. "Indeed the best of newly matriculated students are usually incapable of writing a formal English paragraph."[16] Some teachers are returning to drilling students although now the method is different; the drill is given some relation to other work, and of course the basis of judgment is modified by usage: "For drill work in recognition of the prepositional phrase, students are asked to underline the prepositional phrases in their own compositions."[17]

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[14]David Litsey, "Trends in College Placement Tests in Freshman English," *EJ*, 45 (May 1956), 257.

[15]Oscar M. Haugh, "The English Teacher as Teacher of Speech," *EJ*, 44 (April 1955), 208.

[16]Joseph Keller, "On Teaching the Grammar of English," *EJ*, 45 (April 1956), 107.

[17]Lorraine A. Mosley, "Integrated Grammar and Composition," *EJ*, 45 (May 1956), 274.

Naturally enough, the return of interest in grammar coincides with the greater publicizing of structural linguistics. With the battle of usage fairly won, teachers had time to examine this new problem. Edward Gordon points out the distinction that was being made between usage and grammar in his review of *The English Language Arts in the Secondary School*: "The grammar section points up the ambiguity of the term *grammar*; it makes a major division into 'usage' on the one hand and 'a systematized knowledge of the structure of language' on the other. Usage and grammar should not be confused; they raise different problems in teaching. The section calls for the relating of grammar to speaking and writing."[18] This distinction helps to highlight the development of the contemporary attitude. Articles begin to appear noting the change: two stages are seen, the first centering around the problem of usage, which is nearly completed, and the second concerned with structural linguistics, which is just beginning.

The turn in events was bound to take place. While realizing the old system was faulty and while recognizing different levels of usage, many people continued to feel a need to describe the language, and many felt that some statement about grammatical standards was necessary. If grammar means the structure of our speech, we need some mechanism to handle its description, and structural linguistics provided this. Many teachers began to report satisfactory results from structural linguistics[19] and to note improvements in students' sentence structure,[20] but many remained unconvinced about this seemingly incomprehensible system. Henry Lee Smith says that the "failure to see and to understand the distinction between standard colloquial speech and the literary language and the failure to understand the relationship between speech and writing has been, I am convinced, the chief obstacle in imparting to our students both real literacy and a confident competence in speaking."[21] To Smith, structure implies meaning while to the traditionalists the reverse is true, so, in order

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[18]Edward J. Gordon, "The Significance of *The English Language Arts in the Secondary School*," *EJ*, 46 (May 1957), 289.

[19]John J. Senatore, "SVO: A Key to Clearer Teaching," *EJ*, 46 (October 1957), 419.

[20]Jackie Mallis, "Experiment with the New Grammar," *EJ*, 46 (October 1957), 425.

[21]Henry Lee Smith, "The Teacher and the World of English," *EJ*, 47 (April 1958), 183.

to clarify the stiuation, he explains some of the basic tenets and methods of linguistic analysis.

Smith's position was not received without opposition or at least modification. David A. Conlin wants to ask "Can Traditional Grammar Be Modernized?" He seems typical of many who recognize usage but are reluctant to throw out all that is traditional: he believes that traditional grammar should be "revised" rather than supplanted, by the application of principles from structural linguistics. "It is the assumption of the writer that grammar . . . is of great importance." "Nor is it conceivable that we can can discard our traditional grammar for something new, however scientific, since the grammar that we know and use is such a massive element in our teaching culture."[22] Ralph B. Long supports this view. He agrees that grammar is sadly in need of revision: ". . . it is clear that the old right or wrong dualisms of the schools must be given up: we must now speak in terms of standard, doubtful, and nonstandard usage, and must distinguish formal, general, and informal varieties of standard usage. . . . The conflict between New Linguists and traditional grammarians does not center around matters of divided usage: it centers around analysis." Long's argument is in two parts: (1) Traditionalist grammar is entirely right in accepting the word as its basic unit, not the New Linguists' morpheme, because (a) experts cannot agree how to break up language this way, (b) words are learned as units; we do not learn morphemes. (2) Stress should be on written not on spoken language because (a) it is still the chief medium for important ideas, (b) children don't need to be taught stress and pitch, (c) fine distinctions don't need to be made in writing. "It is not too much to say of Fries and Trager and Smith and their followers, as they have often said of the traditionalists, that their work is wrongly based and wrongly directed."[23] In another article, this time in *College English*, Long argues further that inflectional patterns are not sufficient criteria for judging parts of speech because many words cannot be classified this way: "it is hard to see any real possibility of part-of-speech classifications based in phonology or in morphology."[24] Instead "our generally use-

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[22]David A. Conlin, "Can Traditional Grammar Be Modernized?" *EJ*, 47 (April 1958), 190.

[23]Ralph B. Long, "Words, Meaning, Literacy, and Grammar," *EJ*, 47 (April 1958), 195-199.

[24]Ralph B. Long, "A Syntactic Approach to Part-of-Speech Categories," *CE*, 18 (April 1957), 348.

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ful criteria are two purely syntactical ones: (1) syntactic functions characteristically performed, and (2) kinds of prepositive modifiers characteristically accepted. The second criterion requires us to describe the parts of speech in terms of complex relationships."[25]

W. Wilbur Hatfield, long-time editor of the *English Journal* and *College English* and secretary-treasurer of NCTE, makes a very decisive stand for structural linguistics: "the practical superiority of structural grammar over conventional grammar seems to lie in (1) greater concreteness, (2) ease of inductive presentation, and (3) inclusion of the voice signals of structure words which seem likely to be real aids in punctuation, oral and appreciative reading, and listening."[26]

The NCTE's stand was not strong enough to suit everyone, however. Robert D. Williams maintains that linguistic discoveries have had little effect on textbooks, the NCTE's *English Language Arts in the Secondary School,* or the pronouncements of Council leader Robert Pooley. Pooley's *Teaching English Grammar* eventually "rejects any change in terminology and outlines a course of study which seems to contain not a single technique or concept which was not old in 1932."[27]

Although scholarly conflict over usage had, at least in the pages of the *English Journal,* completely died away by 1959, not everyone agreed that the battle was won. Thurston Womack reported a survey he undertook: "There is some feeling among teachers of English that the battle of usage has been won, and that the current fracas concerns structural linguistics. There is a feeling too among some of us that discussions about moot or debatable usages are somewhat old hat—that everyone knows nowadays that to object to the split infinitive is, as Robert C. Pooley put it in *Teaching English Usage,* 'little more than pedantic rubbish.'" "A comparison on item by item of the teachers' views with the public information reveals that in general the majority of the teachers still reject most usages that public information tends to support as acceptable." Teachers who reject usage tend to be the "high school teacher with more than ten years of teaching experience living in a small town who holds either an A.B. or an M.A. degree. On the other hand, the teacher most likely to accept items of debatable usage is the college teacher in a city

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[25]*Ibid.,* p. 349.

[26]W. Wilbur Hatfield, "Will Structural Grammar Help?" *EJ,* 47 (December 1958), 572.

[27]Robert D. Williams, "Linguistics and Grammar," *EJ,* 48 (October 1959), 388.

of more than 50,000 people with less than ten years of teaching experience and a doctor's degree." The problem of recognizing levels of usage is raised by J. J. Lamberts in *College English*. He says that Fries' equating levels of speech with class levels cannot work in a society without a real class system, and Kenyon's solution to the problem with just two levels, standard and substandard, is an oversimplification as it omits those words which are *too* refined; so he would introduce a third level, hyperstandard, for people who go too far to be correct and become precious and affected.[29]

The great deal of publicity which linguistic grammar has received has not been without ill effects: many teachers are confused by its terminology and uncertain about its basic concepts. Articles such as those by Lamberts are designed to illustrate how linguistics may be used in the practical situations of teaching. The most important ideas, he says, are (1) that language is an aspect of behavior—the spoken word is primary; (2) language as a form of behavior may be studied objectively. The linguist produces a *description* while old grammar books have too often been prescriptive; (3) from observation one may produce an *orderly* description (this is the essence of structural linguistics); (4) each language has its own unique system or structure the totality of whose features are the grammar.[30] The confusion among teachers is examined in an article by Richard Corbin. Teachers, he says, are confused about teaching grammar. The real question is not should we teach grammar but what *kind*. However, while the old grammar is gone, scientists have not fully developed a new type so how can we teach it? Progress has been made, and many use "functional" grammar which did "not renounce formal grammar but tried variously to adapt it to conditions in the modern classroom." It involves teaching only "those grammatical forms without a knowledge of which the student is unable to know whether a sentence is or is not correct." In moving away from "grammar for grammar's sake . . . the functionalists have made a solid contribution to the cause of English." However, functional grammar has weaknesses—it tends to "haphazard treatment of the language," but structural linguistics also has weak-

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[28]Thurston Womack, "Teachers' Attitudes toward Current Usage," *EJ*, 48 (April 1959), 186.

[29]J. J. Lamberts, "Another Look at Kenyon's Levels," *CE*, 24 (November 1962), 142.

[30]J. J. Lamberts, "Basic Concepts for Teaching from Structural Linguistics," *EJ*, 49 (March 1960), 172.

nesses, because, while it describes English systematically, the leaders disagree on many essential matters. Once they can agree we will see, Corbin says, a revolution take hold.[31]

A survey of the California high schools reveals that 4 percent of four thousand teachers of English are using structural linguistics in varying degrees. Thus "structural grammar is [slowly] coming to occupy a more prominent place in the English curriculum."[32] This survey also recorded the chief complaints about structural linguistics, and they were these: (1) It is difficult to understand, and (2) It has confusing terminology. Its use is slowly increasing, but even the most optimistic do not believe it is likely to become the *only* method used in the near future. "I do not know whether the new grammar will ever totally replace the traditional system, but I firmly believe that it will not pass away."[33] This reluctance to believe that structural linguistics will take over completely is maintained in spite of good results obtained by teaching even modified structural linguistics.[34] John R. Searles describes the general feeling well: the present era is "caught between two worlds: one dying, the other powerless to be born." "Linguistics, for all of its bold experimentation and its pioneering efforts to build a more adequate and scientific grammatical system than the one we have now, has not—at least not yet—shaken the foundations of conventional grammar."[35] Attempts to compromise by fusing the old with the new have raised objections such as G. Robert Carlsen's that it produces a "rudderless program."[36] Functionalists deny this and believe they can "carry out the goals of one in the spirit of the second."[37] Archibald A. Hill defends linguistics but argues for the interdependence of the old and the new linguistics. He says one of the most common attacks on structural linguistics is that it neglects

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[31]Richard Corbin, "Grammar and Usage: Progress but Not Millenium," *EJ*, 49 (November 1960), 553.

[32]Charles Alva, "Structural Grammar in California High Schools," *EJ*, 49 (December 1960), 611.

[33]Edgar H. Schuster, "How Good Is the New Grammar?" *EJ*, 50 (September 1961), 397.

[34]Lena Reddick Suggs, "Structural Grammar versus Traditional Grammar in Influencing Writing," *EJ*, 52 (March 1961), 178.

[35]John R. Searles, "New Wine in Old Bottles," *EJ*, 50 (November 1961), 520.

[36]G. Robert Carlsen, "Conflicting Assumptions in the Teaching of English," *EJ*, 49 (September 1960), 377.

[37]Marice C. Brown, "A Re-examination of the Middle Ground," *EJ*, 50 (March 1961), 190.

meaning, but this is not true, he argues, giving Martin Joos' work with translation meanings as an example: Joos relates transformational analysis to meaning. Hill says, "Without transformational study, traditional linguistics will remain incomplete. Without traditional linguistics, transformational study will be insecurely based. When both are developed into a harmonious whole, teachers of the language will have a science which describes for them the nature of language signals, and the operations by which they can be manipulated."[38]

By the end of 1961 then we have a confused picture. The majority of contributors to the *English Journal* and *College English* agree with the committee that current usage should always be the ultimate judge. The old rigid grammar is never mentioned, but a very clear group are reluctant to totally renounce tradition. On the other hand, the idea that no grammar at all should be taught has begun to fade. Teachers definitely feel that some kind of grammar instruction is necessary; the question is what *kind*. Structural linguistics is recognized as responsible for great discoveries, but teachers generally do not want to teach it, and, if they do, it is only in a very modified form. Teachers cannot feel happy with the idea that grammar is purely descriptive, a pure science. Sledd argues both these points in his attack on the more traditionally minded. He insists that linguists *are* interested in grammar—it is after all their field. Linguistics should be studied, however, not as an aid to writing but as a pure science because it has "the humanistic purpose of advancing the study of man as proper to mankind." He is against regarding it as an applied science because he doubts that it helps to improve writing.[39] Robert C. Pooley, whose position seems to be far more in keeping with the majority opinion, urges against this idea and sees grammar as an applied science. He even asks for a middle position with regard to usage—we should not be pedantic, but some correctness must be insisted upon.[40] In assessing the resistance to change among teachers, John C. McGalliard says many teachers mistakenly assume that linguists are saying whatever is said is right. He argues that linguists *are* concerned with correctness, and that they use the standards of social criteria as the means

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[38]A. A. Hill, "Linguistic Principles for Interpreting Meaning," CE, 22 (April 1961), 466-473.

[39]James Sledd, "Grammar or Gramerye?" *EJ*, 49 (May 1960), 297.

[40]Robert C. Pooley, "Dare Schools Set a Standard in English Usage?" *EJ*, 49 (March 1960), 176.

of determining this because language is not immutable but a folkway and these change.[41]

Ralph B. Long, in looking ahead to the grammar of the 1960's, insists that it "should be entirely analytical and systematic in organization and presentation . . . and should begin with analysis of the structure of clauses and of clause equivalents. Clauses are built around minimally complete sentences . . . we call kernels."[42] He continues his attack on teaching phonetics and morphemes as the basis for grammar: we should accept the word as the smallest unit in syntactic analysis: "It is doubtful that the English grammar of the 1960's should employ the concept of the morpheme" because it is troublesome, and "there is no reason to believe that the grammar of the 1960's would be improved by being based in a carefully worked out phonetics in which stresses, and vowel and consonant sounds were analyzed before syntax was attempted."[43]

In 1962, the *English Journal* published an article indicating a possible solution for those people unable to renounce the old yet wishing to take advantage of new discoveries. A third alternative is offered: Noam Chomsky's "generative grammar." Owen Thomas describes the theory and tells of a class experiment which indicated it could be effectively taught in schools. The class he taught saw only too clearly how traditional grammarians and linguists are divided among themselves. They agreed traditional grammar was too arbitrary to teach and that linguistics was too complicated. Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures* simplified the problem. Chomsky defines grammar as "a device for generating the sentence of a language" and sees its purpose as an applied science "to enable a student to construct grammatically correct sentences." He simplifies sentence structure by his concept of "kernel" sentences from which all other sentences develop by "transformations." Another important contribution, Thomas says, is Chomsky's division of "grammar into three parts. The first part presents those rules that pertain to kernel structure [structural grammar]. . . . The second part presents rules that generate nonkernel sentences. . . . And the third part presents the rules that are necessary to account

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[41]John McGalliard, "Resistance to Change in Language Teaching," *CE*, 20 (April 1959), 347-350.

[42]Ralph B. Long, "English Grammar in the 1960's," *CE*, 21 (February 1960), 265-275.

[43]*Ibid.*

for such irregular forms as 'child,' 'children' and 'buy,' 'bought' [historical grammar]."[44] Thus by fusing both traditional grammar and structural linguistics, Chomsky might be expected to reach a wider audience than other linguists.

The need for a third alternative becomes even more apparent when we see some people give up and return to traditional grammar. The authors of the teachers' guide of the *Illinois English Bulletin* affirm the importance of teaching grammar "because grammar helps the pupil 'to punctuate; to avoid fragments, comma faults, and fused sentences; to comprehend and develop style (parallelism, sentence variety, etc.); and to make decisions about acceptable speech form.'" The authors are plain in stating what *kind* of grammar they recommend: "Our wares are preponderantly traditional. Until brighter promise shows in the new grammars, it seems well to use the old."[45]

Possibly with greater exposure Chomsky's grammar will be accepted by people like this who are unable to find use for structural linguistics. W. Nelson Francis recommends, for those not fully aware of the different varieties of grammar, the book published in 1963 of the 1958 Third Texas Conference on Problems of Linguistic Analysis in English attended by Sledd, Chomsky, Smith, and many other prominent linguists. It describes three types of grammar: (1) "word grammar" which is like traditional grammar "in its emphasis on the grammatical function of the single word and in its use of meaning, though more sophisticated and responsible"; (2) "phonologically based syntax, a grammar which is concerned with interpretation and analysis, and which attempts to restrict its evidence to the clues overtly present in the stream of speech"; (3) "generative-transformational grammar, which sets as its goal the explanation of the language-learning and sentence-generating powers of the human mind and is thus interested in the creative rather than the interpretative side of grammar."[46]

Noam Chomsky's generative grammar can no longer be ignored, and articles such as Owen Thomas' must take account of it when they classify the various types of grammar—Thomas divides grammar into four general kinds, traditional, historical, structural, and gen-

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[44]Owen Thomas, "Generative Grammar: Toward Unification and Simplification," *EJ*, 51 (February 1962), 97-99.

[45]Quoted in "This World of English," *EJ*, 52 (1963), 217.

[46]W. Nelson Francis, "The Present State of Grammar," *EJ*, 56 (May 1963), 321.

erative, and recommends the last as "perhaps the best available basis" for the study of meaning.[47] Robert B. Lees, in a paper read at the 1962 NCTE convention, adds his appraisal of generative grammar to the discussion. He criticizes structural linguists because they "have called attention to the phonic aspect of speech which formerly has been largely ignored as, for example, intonation; but they have done little else than produce a terminology and a misleading transcription system." The latter is not much use in the classroom because "phonemic transcriptions are utterly irrelevant to the main problem—correcting the student's theme for poorly designed sentences." Transformational grammar is much more useful because it provides simple answers to questions raised about ambiguities and syntactic functions by "grammatical transformations." Lees does not, however, believe that "the study or teaching of English grammar is very helpful in training children to write better or to appreciate literature." There is little "justification for teaching it in conjunction with rhetoric or literature; rather, such a study of language belongs in the area of science and general education along with psychology and anthropology."[48]

Another paper read before the 1962 NCTE convention supports the idea that the teaching of linguistics has little or no effect in improving students' writing. Paul Roberts, in discussing the various types of grammar and their relationship to the teaching of composition, says that in his opinion "linguistic science has no cure for the problems of the composition class, so long as that class is viewed as a means of teaching people to write better." People who are basically nonwriters cannot be taught by talking about the topic sentence; "what linguistics does offer to departments of English is a subject matter." Roberts insists that language should be taught as a pure science: "We should study language, particularly our own language, just because it is a good thing to know. Of all the humane studies it is the most humane, since it is the thing that is central and common and peculiar to mankind." Having asserted the importance of teaching grammar, Roberts surveys the field and comes up praising Chomsky. The old grammar, he says, was Latinized, and, lacking coherence and intellectual interest, it was easily attacked, but it was not defeated

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[47]Owen Thomas, "Grammatici Certant," *EJ*, 52 (May 1963), 326.

[48]Robert B. Lees, "The Promise of Transformational Grammar," *EJ*, 52 (May 1963), 329-330.

because it is still extensively taught. We have learned a great deal in the last twenty or thirty years but our grammar

> is still and always essentially traditional grammar. This is something that many of us—certainly myself included—have not always seen. We have looked upon linguistics as a kind of opposite of traditional grammar, but it is quite easy to view it as a refinement, an acceptance of essential features and a pruning away of irrelevent or erroneous ones. . . . It seems to me that one could make a good argument that the three greatest English grammarians of this century have been Jespersen, Fries, and Chomsky. All three are essentially traditional grammarians, not rejecting the grammar of the past but improving on it. . . . But at the present time, the only type of traditional grammar that we can be seriously concerned with is the latest one—generative transformational grammar.[49]

Thus Roberts too sees Chomsky's grammar as the most promising because it does not reject but builds upon traditional grammar.

As Roberts points out, grammar used to be taught for its own sake, because "it was good to know." It was not taught with the aim of improving style or sentence structure. The answer to the teacher's question of what to teach seems to be to teach grammar, the new kind, the same way literature is taught, for its own sake: "We don't or shouldn't study literature for practical reasons; we don't read *Othello* in order to ascertain the dangers of jealousy."[50] Roberts does not deny, however, that teachers may use linguistic knowledge to correct students' grammar: ". . . it would be foolish to deny that right and wrong exist in the use of language, or that much wrongness is simply ungrammaticality—unintentional departure from a specifiable grammar. To specify that grammar and to teach it to students is certainly a reasonable thing to do."[51]

During the nine years under discussion in this paper, probably the most striking change in attitude toward English is the growing demand for the return to the teaching of grammar. By the end of this period, there is no evidence on the pages of the *English Journal* or *College English* that anyone still believes grammar should be abolished from the classroom. What kind of grammar to teach now becomes the most important question. The old kind is rejected as arbitrary and

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[49]Paul Roberts, "Linguistics and the Teaching of Composition," *EJ*, 52 (May 1963), 334.

[50]*Ibid.*, p. 333.

[51]*Ibid.*, p. 335.

often erroneous. Structural linguistics is too confusing for even many teachers, let alone students, to understand. A solution to this problem cannot be found until the teacher has decided whether grammar is a pure or an applied science. Relatively few articles in the *English Journal* or *College English* indicate real improvement in students' writing as a result of the teaching of structural linguistics. Most, particularly those written by the professional linguists, maintain that it cannot improve writing, but that it should still be taught as we teach organic chemistry or literature without regard to the uses it may be put to. This was the old fashioned attitude and, after a long absence, it seems we have come back to it again. To return to the first question, the kind of grammar most likely to be accepted is obviously one that can most easily be understood and which has the broadest basis. Chomsky's grammar has been proposed by many because it uses both traditional and modern grammatical techniques and because it can be relatively easily understood. It is not to be supposed that linguistic exploration will end with Chomsky, so, even if generative grammar wins general acceptance, it will surely eventually be modified, expanded, or completely outmoded by some new idea. Thus, although no absolute statement can be made about the end of the whole controversy, the direction can be guessed.

## Significant Findings of This Study

- There has been a variety of opinions expressed in the *English Journal.*
- In spite of this variety there is direction in the development of attitudes.
- The National Council of Teachers of English has been receptive to new ideas.
- The Council has been helpful in translating findings of scholars into principles and practices relevant to English classrooms.